

DESIGNING A MENTORING PROGRAM FOR
FATHERLESS BLACK MALES IN A
POST-MODERN GENERATION

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	iv
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	v
DEDICATION.....	vii
INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER	
1. MINISTRY FOCUS.....	4
2. BIBLICAL FOUNDATION.....	33
3. HISTORICAL FOUNDATION.....	55
4. THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION.....	70
5. THEORETICAL FOUNDATION.....	80
6. PROJECT ANALYSIS.....	96
APPENDIX	
A. PRE & POST-ASSESSMENTS/INTERVIEWS.....	129
B. PARENT/CHILD WRITTEN AGREEMENT.....	135
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	137

ABSTRACT

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This project's aim was to empower and cultivate a sense of belonging for young fatherless black males using interactive teachings that fostered a sense of pride and consciousness as a male. The teaching was interactive and pulled from a host of issues and topics that young men can relate to. The model consisted of young males from the ages of twelve to eighteen that have not had a substantial father figure in their lives. Through this project, student's awareness concerning the importance of fathers and themselves increased. The data triangulation used for this project included: Pre-assessment, post-assessment, participant-interviews, and parent-interviews.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

To my mother Pastor Teresa D. Tyus, without your support, encouragement, and constant, love none of this would be possible. It was you who stood in the gap when dad passed, providing for your children financially, emotionally, and spiritually. Thank you mom, you are the true definition of love and what a Godly woman should be. Thank you for believing in your son when it was difficult to believe in himself, pushing him when others did not believe in him, and being the model of a true lover of Christ. You are the best leader anyone could ask for.

To my brother Adam Tyus, your love and direction has been vital in my development. Your teaching about a relationship with the Holy Spirit and on prayer has been the single most defining moment in my spiritual development. To my sister Tenesia R. Woods, your love and support has always been appreciated, there is no one like you, and I love you.

To Matia R. Davis you are truly my best friend; words cannot express what you truly mean to me. Your support, love, prayers, inspiration, and dedication to seeing me grow into what God has called me to be are like no other. Few people know how close we really are. I love you more than you will ever know.

To my mentors, Dr. Sir Walter Mack Jr. and Dr. Herbert Miller II, thank you for your constant push, support, and belief in a young man like me. I must say I have always

felt secure and cultivated in your presence. You opened my eyes to a new level of ministry, community, and purpose.

To my World Conquerors Through Jesus Christ family, thank you for praying and supporting me through this process. You have watched me grow from a young six-year-old kid to now your assistant pastor. Thank you for believing in me.

To my King and Lord! Best Friend! True Love! Jesus Christ, you are everything! I am who I am because you loved me first. I would not replace our relationship for anything in the world. Thank you. I am forever yours!

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my father, John E. Tyus. Even though you passed away, you laid a proper foundation and roadmap of what a man is. I always wanted to be like you and as a child you were my rock. You were the model that I never had. Even though you passed away, God turned it around for my good and allowed it to be a doorway to my inner purpose. I can truly say my pain produced passion and my passion produced purpose. I will see you soon, Dad!

INTRODUCTION

Turning on our television, it is common to hear on any news station about crimes in our perspective cities that took place that day. Hearing about young boys being murdered in our inner cities rarely grips the heart of the watcher anymore. It has become so common that it is almost as if hearing about young men of color having low education and living in underserved communities is expected. Some may argue it would be more catching and more mind boggling if the news spoke about a young man of color doing something good for his family and community. Why is it so much crime takes place in our communities amongst young black males? Why is it that we turn a blind eye to the need of this crying out population?

Young black males struggle for self-identity in a culture that tries to give them everything except what they truly need. Self-identification is one of the single most important factors to discover in a man's life. Self-discovery is what everyone is looking for in some form. A strong parental foundation has been proven to be a key factor in aiding children in finding themselves. Parents are the first example of humanity a child sees. They have an overwhelming responsibility to showcase and demonstrate what children can expect to become. Self-awareness is built from whatever foundation a child is given. That foundation is their parents. They are the springboard to what the child will become.

In a world where social issues persist and everything is vying for people's attention, the black male needs support and guidance like every other population.

Designing a Mentoring Program for Fatherless Black Males in a Post-Modern Generation is a program designed to empower and bring awareness to the need of fathers in the lives of fatherless black males. This program will aid young men who are fatherless to learn simple principles fathers would teach their sons. Encouraging them to build self-awareness and help provide them with a model they can follow in a world that is focused on giving them its own model. The usage of Facebook as a platform will also be utilized for weekly communication and posting information from the sessions. The sessions will also be aided by other men who themselves suffered from the lack of father, giving their testimonies and experiences, helping aid the young men in focusing their lives in the right direction.

The module will consist of young men who do not have active fathers in their lives from the ages of twelve to eighteen years of age. Participants will participate in a six-week program that will meet once a week on Saturday mornings, examining manhood through daily practical principles that is relatable, insightful, and encouraging. The qualitative strategies used consist of the following: Pre-assessment, post-assessment, participant-interviews, and parent-interviews. The goal of this particular strategy is to bring awareness to the need of positive men in society and the need for fathers in the lives of children, which will result in positive outcomes and personal development.

Chapter One provides an early look and the beginning stages of the model through the form of a spiritual autobiography. A context by which the model is needed and founded and reasons for carrying it out is also provided.

Chapter Two will discuss the biblical foundations that point to the need of fathers in the lives of their sons and proper parenting. This chapter will also discuss why God speaks to this topic.

Chapter Three touches on the historical foundation, which speaks to the need of fathers in the lives of their children. This chapter also has discussions of where the issue may have started and how the past may still be a present issue.

Chapter Four discusses theological views on this topic. It will provide a look at different theological views that may be applied to this point of discussion and need in the community.

Chapter Five explains the model and design of this particular project. This chapter discusses how data was collected to prove the hypothesis of the project.

Chapter Six focuses on the field study and its findings. This chapter describes what actually happened during the program and what the results were. The chapter also discusses the data analysis from the pre-assessment and post-assessment. It will consist of the reflection, summary, and conclusion of the project.

CHAPTER ONE

MINISTRY FOCUS

One of the amazing things about God is God provides a purpose for each individual on the planet, no matter what bad decisions were committed, losses, ups and downs, God's focus on whom we were ordained to be never changes. As a child growing up in a home where my father was a choir director and my mother was the organist, church was a staple in the home. Feeling the pull to do God's will and focusing on that fact made some things in life easier and certain common stumbling blocks less prevalent than your average childhood story. However, the journey started off rougher than many would suspect because of birth trials that had to be overcome. During birth, the doctors informed mother there were severe complications taking place. Understanding the complications that faced her, she was given hope when the doctors told her the baby had a veil over his face. In order to be revealed, the veil needed to be removed. The first words out the doctor's mouth were, "Wow, Mrs. Tyus, this is a special baby." This was a special baby, with a deathly sickness.

A disease called "Yellow Jaundice" was a major hit to my parents and two older siblings. KidsHealth.org describes the disease as, "...the yellow color of the skin and whites of the eyes caused by excess bilirubin in the blood. Bilirubin is produced by the

normal breakdown of red blood cells.”¹ Many babies spend their earliest years in the arms of their parents; weeks are spent housed within an incubator.

As she cried staring at the incubator, her faith was strong and she believed God for a miracle and knew there was purpose in all of this. Dad being the backbone and leader of the family comforted her and encouraged her heart to the fact that God was able. After much prayer, a few weeks passed and their prayers were answered. However, this was not the end of the battle with jaundice. The battle with Jaundice took a turn for the worse in the coming months. Early life was difficult having passed away three times due to the sickness, one time in particular lying on my parent’s bed just weeks old. My mother began to scream because she realized her child had lost consciousness. My father came into the room, kneeled down, began to pray and declare his faith in his Lord. As father continued to pray, consciousness was regained as air was restored. This is a point of reference that Gods hand was on my life from the very beginning and proves that my life has purpose and reason.

Mother was my world as most children’s mothers are. There was an extremely tight bond with her from the beginning. Mother was a strong woman full of love; anyone would feel completely secure when in her presence. She exemplified Christ in such way, that often people everywhere refer to her as their mother. She treated everyone with respect and honor simply because it was the right thing to do. One of her consistent teachings was to “always treat others with respect even when they did not respect you.” This taught me do right even in the toughest times. Because of a lack of balance it did not assist me in focusing on not allowing others to take advantage of me. Mother always

¹ Jaundice in Healthy Newborns," KidsHealth.org, Accessed November 8, 2012, http://kidshealth.org/parent/pregnancy_center/newborn_care/jaundice.html.

enforced doing the right thing but rarely enforced self-defense, which proved to be needed when leaving the security of home.

Growing up ignorant to the fact that everyone was not trained and taught like myself caused for much heartache and pain in the process. Even with my mother's constant prayers and showing of love it proved in many cases not useful when dealing with others and their hateful actions. It taught me how to love but not defend. While she proved through her actions what the love of Christ was, there was a lack in balance when dealing with others and their attacks. Being raised in the church all her life where her father was a pastor in Cleveland, Ohio and a superintendent in the Church of God in Christ organization, she was used to following orders and being submissive to authority. She instilled these characteristics of love and respect of others in her children.

My father was the opposite of my mother. He was very stubborn, strong, and demanding. He was very straightforward with his words; he spoke his mind and did not care what others thought concerning them.

He was viewed as this strong man that so many people depended on. He was the rock of the family. He stood six-feet-three-inches with a strong muscular frame and a stern look. To many people he was an intimidating man, but to his family he was daddy, protector, leader, and provider. He would often demand that my older brother and myself be strong and not fearful in tough times. This added pressure to us as young boys left us feeling as if we had to live up to our father's demands. This demand and expectation was proven during times of schooling, when we would have a confrontation with other students. We knew if we did not stand up for ourselves, we would get reprimanded back

at home, not from our mother but from our father. This was the mentality our father instilled within his children, to be resilient and strong.

One side of him was strong and another side of him was sensitive to his family's needs. One thing that is cemented in my memory was my parents each kissing me goodnight every evening before bed. This helped cultivate a sense of security and love. It was something that seemed natural, which is a rarity in today's family structure. He was someone who was extremely intelligent and no outwardly challenged him mentally when it came to issues that he was passionate about because of his high intellectual level. He was also one we never wanted to get in trouble with, because he was always the one who carried out punishment in the household. Mother preferred to allow him to do it, it was only on rare occasions that my mother would step up to the plate and deliver such punishment.

My parents were the type of parents that if you were doing wrong they would look at you from across the room and you knew to either get it together or they were going to get you together afterwards.

Family life was very stable and we had a blessed upbringing within our family. However, there were struggles that lied ahead in life. Fear, insecurity, the pain of loss and rejection, lack of purpose and identity, and anger lurked right around the corner of life. The way these attacks were brought about in life varied from situation to situation but each watered and cultivated each previous issue.

During these younger years the devil set out to attack me and began to plant seeds of fear in my life. From a young age, having encountered many visitations from demonic spirits fear was a common part of life. Their faces varied but their presence all felt the

same, dark and evil. There were numerable occasions of waking up in the middle of the night and being tormented by their presence; the feeling of fear and torment is almost indescribable. This was no dream; their physical presence would be seen in my bedroom. They were not only shadows, but details of their faces and bodies were visible. Being a child this of course created a huge sense of fear in life. Running to my parent's room in the middle of the night because of visitations from demonic forces was a common thing in our household. My father would relax me and pray over me until the feeling of fear left.

This constantly occurred from the early age of two to until about eleven years of age. Their purpose was to set up the seed of fear within my spirit concerning the things of the spirit realm, which would in turn affect every area of life.

Once a demonic spirit appeared in my room. Physically the demonic spirit had a muscular frame and his face was pale with extremely dark features in locations like his eyes, cheek bones, and mouth. He had a dark ape-like figure on his shoulder and his hair was swooped upward in the form of horns. The demonic figure stared down towards a book it held. It was difficult seeing his eyes because of the darkness. This of course rattled my mind and shook my spirit with fear and torment. At merely six years of age, taken back by the aura of his presence and the frightening appearance, the only thing to do was lie still until it passed. It was something unknown, something dark, and something supernatural. As children we were never allowed to watch horror movies, so there was no point of reference concerning these things. At the time my only understanding was they were ugly, scary, and evil; my only rescue was my father and mother.

Eventually, after consistently seeing these spirits, my father instructed me to begin to call on the name of Jesus whenever they appeared. He said, “When you see them, call on the name of Jesus and they will leave.” The next time a visitation of a demonic spirit transpired, my father’s instructions came to mind to call on the name of Jesus. It was as if my mouth was being held by something, which prevented me from speaking.

Along with the grip of fear, it felt as if something from the unseen world was literally holding my mouth. It was as if it knew what was about to be said, which frightened me to my core. Crying from fear and running to my father, he prayed and peace came over me. During the next visitation the name of Jesus came out of my mouth and the demonic force left. The spirit did not leave slowly, but the force left immediately and there was an immediate shift in the atmosphere. The atmosphere transitioned from being fearfully tense to immediate peace. That was a shifting point in my understanding concerning the power of Christ.

My parents were very active in church. My mother was the organist and father was the choir director and a minister in training. In the 1992, my parents informed us God had impressed on their hearts to move in a different direction by starting their own ministry. This was a confusing time because we as children were unable to understand why we were leaving our current church.

My father started World Conquerors Through Jesus Christ; it was founded in 1992 with a mission focused on reconciling families back to God. This was a pivotal point in life because even more visibly than before, my father was seen as a mentor and the point of contact for all things spiritual. He was not only my father, but he took on a

role of father and mentor to so many others. It was not only his family reaching out to him for needs and guidance, but a large diverse group of people looking to him for counsel. People gravitated to him because of his wisdom and strength.

He was very wise in his dealings with people and they loved him because he was not a surface individual; he dug deep and dealt with the real issues in society and the church. He was one not to play around with issues but looked at the real root cause; giving you real guidance to help the problem even if that meant you feeling uncomfortable. The ministry began to grow at a rapid rate and within the first year the ministry had grown to exceed 150 members. My father seemed happy and the ministry seemed to be growing in their spiritual awareness and their needs were being met. As everything seemed to be going great my world was shaken and changed forever at the age of seven.

One evening my father and mother called a family meeting, which was rare. My siblings knew something was up because having a family meeting almost never occurred. We knew it was big news. Playing with an orange stress ball while our father began to talk, little did we know the paradigm shift that was about to take place. Dad was sitting in his red chair and my mother was standing next to him holding back tears in her eyes. My father looked at us and said, "You all know I have been having some stomach pains for a while." We all agreed.

He told us he went to the doctor and they diagnosed him with colon cancer. We really did not know exactly what that meant because we were not familiar with colon cancer. However, my seventeen-year-old sister was more aware and became very

emotional as tears ran down her face. Mother informed us that father would be wearing a bag to aid him with his cleansing process.

The family discussion occurred in December of 1993. My father passed away in July of 1994. He went from a healthy strong man that seemed invincible to someone who was barely recognizable by family members. During those seven months he lost around seventy-five pounds. His death caused some unseen changes within me. My father's physicality and mentality changed consistently. One day he would be very coherent, on another day he would be disconnected because medication he was receiving. At times he would have delusional episodes that caused him to speak and say things that were completely unheard of. Under medication he would begin to speak about God's nonexistence. It was a drastic change from his previous image of strength and consistency. Then there were times he was himself and not heavily medicated and would be sitting in his wheelchair saying, "I know God, I know," as tears rolled down his face. It was as if he knew the Lord was taking him and it was his time.

We watched as my mother fed him, helped him to the bathroom and catered to his every need. During this time my uncle became the patriarch of the family and took over all my father's pastoral duties. He began to make decisions for the family and my father's health, at times completely dismissing the fact that my mother was still present. During this time my mother dealt with much scrutiny from my father's side of the family. She was told his sickness and ultimately his death was her fault and it was due to her not being a good wife.

My father passed in July of 1993 and even on his last breath the ministry still believed he would rise again. During this time my family was in the middle of confusion and control on so many levels.

The aftermath of the situation was my uncle took over the role of pastor for the next year or so. After much confusion, he later resigned from the leadership role. There were times that my uncle showed his controlling side and it had a negative effect on the people. At one point the parishioners had service outside because my uncle refused to unlock the doors of the church for some selfish reason. God truly had his hand on my life showing that in the midst of controversy and hatred it is still possible to maintain integrity and holiness. This example was shown through my mother. My mother was talked about, blamed, mistreated but through it all she never spoke negatively about any family members or any parties involved. She continued to show me and everyone involved the love of Christ and a proper example of a Christian. Through her actions she taught me to be very cautious in my personal sphere of influence and how it is displayed in the mist of turmoil and fire. She did not allow her situation to dictate her actions, and remained the same in the midst of pressure.

This is why properly influencing your children through your own actions is so crucial to their personal development. My mother has shown that an example will go much further and last much longer than words. The proper teaching is one that teaches with their actions rather than just with their words.

The death of my father caused such a paradigm shift in life and the effects are still present to this day. Until the age of thirteen, tears were never shed because of my father's death. The trauma of the loss was never displayed until later in life. As a result, many

insecurities and fears plagued my relationships, education, ministry, and self-acceptance. Always being the one who backed down from conflict because of fear of confrontation and feeling inadequate to handle the situations was a common reaction to problems. Being called “dumb” and “stupid” as a child by people whose purpose was to encourage and nurture did not help either. These actions often times came from peers, school teachers, and family members who aided in the breakdown of self-esteem. One example that is forever branded in my memory is being in math class at the age of eleven and a teacher calling me stupid in front of the class. Math was a challenging subject and the teacher continued to degrade me in front of the class, declaring my eventual failure in life because of my inadequacies in education.

These actions continued in gym class where being talked and picked on by my gym instructor was a weekly occurrence. The gym instructor would imply that the size of my head was large. Anytime a mistake was made in class “stupid” references were made. He would literally single me out and take out time in his class to make jokes about me. This of course had a negative effect on my self-esteem.

This continued throughout elementary and some of middle school. This in itself caused a hunger for acceptance. A desire for attention and acceptance grew and manifested through becoming the class clown. While naturally having an outgoing personality it was enhanced and magnified for the purposes of acceptance.

This of course was a false sense of fulfillment; it was God who needed to fill that void. The purpose of high school was about being popular and making friends. It of course came with a price. As a result of always being known as the jokester, being taken serious was never possible. Having a serious conversation was out of the picture for me

because of the image being portrayed. Being labeled by my peers as immature only increased my feeling of low self-esteem, which resulted in poor grades and furthered the mentality of inward nothingness. Intimidation was common because all my friends were making great grades while mine suffered. The only thing that kept me going was the love of my mother and her faith in me.

The role of a father is essential in the development of a male; it is his only point of reference of who he is and a reference of who he can become. My lack of acceptance and emptiness made me wonder what my purpose was. Seeing my friends with their fathers only caused more pain and a sense of rejection from God. One night my siblings sat in the kitchen discussing our father and their memories of him. When trying to include my memories, my sister quickly dismissed me from the conversation, stating my youth as a factor in not knowing him.

This of course rattled my emotional state and further watered the seed of neglect and abandonment. The hurt progressed to anger, which caused me to be physically confrontational when provoked, and afterward would find myself crying at night when no one was around.

At age eleven my life changed again, but this time for the better. At this time in life, my brother was really becoming serious about his relationship with God. At the young age of fifteen he knew more about Christ than many twice his age. Seeing him pray every day at 6:00 P.M. instilled a desire to learn the things of God. He was passionate about his walk with Christ and his passion produced awareness in me. He would stay up all night long reading books on the Holy Spirit and reading his bible. Seeing my brother do this changed my life forever. It was the single most important shift

in my spiritual life. He became my mentor from a distance. Watching him grow produced a need to grow myself. Seeing many others looking to him for spiritual advice reminded me of my father. At this point in my life my brother was my inspiration. He showed me that in order to change, one must first be inspired to do so. Inspiration comes by seeing something different that connects with you. One day he called me into his room and said, “Do you want to pray with me?” He closed his door, turned on some worship music as we both kneeled to the ground and began to pray.

He began to worship God as if I was not even there. He would, in the middle of worshipping, coach me and mentor me on how to do it.

Mimicking him in his walk with the Lord was the foundation until it became real to me. For the first time in my life something unknown was being experienced. It was the presence of God. An internal burden began to be lifted. It was an unknown, unexplainable experience. God used my brother to mentor and teach me the power of prayer, and a real relationship with Christ beyond religion. He taught me intimacy with the father on an unknown level. While always knowing about Christ, it was only at that point that his presence was felt. After prayer my, brother led me to the bathroom and as we looked into the mirror and he said, “Look brother, you even look different.” To this day, my prayer time is conducted in the same manner that my brother first taught. A spiritual nerve was struck when I began to refer to God as my father. Not knowing the significance this act had, it broke me down and caused an emotional release on a spiritual level.

A tremendous burden was lifted from my inner being; this connected me to God on a more personal and deeper level than before. God was beginning to heal my pain.

God was healing a wound that was overlooked by my youth, the pain of my father's death. This experience confirmed God was a personal healer, not this traditional figment of my imagination that I learned about as a child. He was not the God I was taught to love; he was a God I was now learning to love. From that point a very important lesson was learned. God wants the brokenness in us all, because it is through humanity's brokenness that real healing can take place.

God was not interested in image, but rather, interested in pain. This was the beginning of my forever with Christ.

Soon after graduating from high school, an emotionally abusive relationship that caused me to be defensive, hurt, and angry was formed. She would later become a hindrance and cause pain in my life. This experience also helped me by pushing me back into reconciling my relationship with Christ. We dated for a year and a half, but through that time experiences caused me to rebel against my childhood rearing. Opening myself up to this woman intimately, emotionally, physically, and mentally caused me to forsake my relationship with God. In the relationship, unfaithfulness and cheating became the norm. The emotional attachment to her was so strong, that a willingness to suffer the hurt and pain of disloyalty in order to keep her was present. During this relationship my self-esteem fell to an all-time low. Having no motivation in life at the time, my grades continued to suffer in college, resulting in being placed on academic probation twice.

Feeling empty, hurt, unfulfilled, frustrated, and angry all at the same time was normal. While in the midst of the pain the Holy Spirit was tugging at my heart, telling me to return back to my first love. She became so common with her cheating that remorse was no longer present. Using my faith against me she would say, "Get over it; you are

supposed to forgive right? Isn't that what the bible says? I did it last week, that's the past. I said I was sorry." It took a minister at church to call and inform me that this relationship with her was a self-inflicted wound.

The minister informed me that anything after this point was self-inflicted because of my conscious decision to stay. Her words awakened something inside and caused me to understand my pain was being sustained because of self-loathing and self-infliction. After this revelation things began to change. Releasing her from my life became easier. For the first time in years my heart spoke to God and cried, "Help Me." The mental and emotional strain of life was becoming too much to deal with. From that cry, self-worth began to arise in my spirit. A few months after the minister gave those transformative words, the relationship ended. This situation caused me to learn that everything that is common and comfortable is not always healthy. It takes someone to have enough love and care for the person ruining their lives to reach down and pull them up. As a man, that was needed in my life. Love was needed. Mentoring was needed.

This caused me to pray more and spend more time with God. Nothing ever seemed to work properly until time with God was spent. Eventually my G.P.A went from a low 1.2 to a high 3.7. It was this horrible time in my life God had to show me that true fulfillment would only be found in God and not in humanity. The power was in my source and not in my life and the lies it spoke into me. Throughout this season many mentors came in and out of my life, encouraging me to become who God called me to be. God began to touch on serious issues in my life like fear, insecurity, and the lack of a proper male influence. During this time, crying a lot in prayer and releasing a lot of pain from over the years was normal to me.

The pain of rejection from teachers; the pain of abandonment from the death of my father, and fear, were all things God began to heal.

Since childhood, prophecies were spoken in my life of great things in ministry that lied ahead of me, leading to a movement that would radically change the world for God's kingdom. It was as if each time a visiting minister would come to our church, the prophet would call out to me and speak about the mandate on my life. My whole life there was always a feeling to preach the word of God and someday pastor the ministry my father founded and my mother led. Becoming an ordained minister one month before turning twenty-two, that call was becoming a reality. During this time, my uncle and other ministers took me under their wing and began to pour into me from a distance concerning ministry and business. While they were not always present, their presence alone made a difference and encouraged me to move forward in ministry.

People that had doubted me for years began to change their minds concerning my calling, including the friends that once doubted me. Continuing to grow in ministry demonstrates how much my life resembled my father and brought a sense of belonging to my heart. It is amazing how someone can be so much like the father they never knew. As God continued to grow me in ministry, a compelling feeling to strive for greatness and be all that God had called me to be developed. This was not limited to ministry but included a desire to cultivate and be productive in life.

While my past includes being talked about, mistreated, losing my father to colon cancer, being put down by teachers, peers and family, dealing with fear, and experiencing demonic torment, there is one thing that has been present. That one thing is the love of Christ in my life. Realizing there is nothing that will separate us from God's love has

been the benchmark where my faith is hung. His love is what prevents fear; his love is what causes us to trust him and it was his love that healed the wound of father absenteeism. The headache, heartache, anger, fear, and pain of rejection is healed only through Christ and his love.

Context

The vision of the ministry was birthed through my father, the late Rev. John E. Tyus, in 1990. At forty-one, my father felt an unction from the Holy Spirit to start a ministry. He was told for years through various prophets and prophetesses that this was his true calling. As he served as a minister and the Choir Director at our former assembly, he constantly voiced to my mother his desire to start his own ministry. Eventually, he found the courage he needed to begin. He received confirmations through various sources concerning ministry, which only fueled his desire to move forward. In late 1992, my father accepted the call, and believed the time was right to begin. The name of the ministry given to him was World Conquerors Through Jesus Christ. It had a mission of family and racial reconciliation. Reconciling families back to Christ stood out in his spirit and was the foundation he built upon.

The ministry began with nine members, including our family in a little storefront on a Main Street in Columbus, Ohio. With a passion for people, my father pressed towards his God-given goals, touched many lives and pointed them to Christ.

Within a year the ministry moved to a larger location inside a school chapel; there, it flourished. The membership swelled from nine members to over one-hundred within months. With a focus on family reconciliation and deliverance, the ministry made

a large impact on our local community. At this time the ministry was made up of black families, half males and half females, which were rare in the “black church.” My father poured his knowledge into the Men’s Department of the church, having breakfasts, basketball games and frequent outings. He understood the importance of the male figure in families and stressed this importance to the men in the ministry.

Finding purpose in life was highly stressed to the men, and the absolute importance of following the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Having men participating from all walks of life, my father concluded he needed to understand and befriend the men in order to bring them closer to God. He took them outside the four walls of the church to minister and pour into them. He had many outings and meetings with them to properly nurture and build rapport with them. Being an example and godly influence was very important to his vision with the men in the ministry.

The Men’s Department consisted of former drug lords, drug addicts, street hustlers, womanizers, fornicators, and philosophers, just to name a few. Through the guidance of the Holy Spirit they turned to Christ to live for Him and not for drugs, money or selfish purposes.

At the beginning of 1994, Rev. John E. Tyus was stricken with Colon Cancer, which would later cause his death. As he battled this sickness at home with his family, he continued ministering at the church. It was only when he became unable to continue that others became aware of his failing health. He revealed to the congregation his condition, which shook them to their core. This was a major shock to the people; the ministry was thriving and conquering new ground when they were confronted with this crisis. To many he was their spiritual father and teacher. The ministry and their faith were greatly tried.

As they endured and stood with my family through this, they found it difficult to understand and accept the reality of their leader diminishing in health and vitality. Soon, my uncle, who was the pastor's brother, took over pastoral duties.

Rev. John E. Tyus passed at the age of forty-five in the hot summer month of July 1994. The ministry had grown to over 150 members, with a thriving Music Department, Men's Department, Women's Ministry, Youth Ministry, Outreach Ministry, and other ministries to fit the needs of the community.

After pastoring the ministry for the next year following Rev. John E. Tyus' passing, his brother gave up his pastoral duties to the First Lady, Pastor Teresa D. Tyus, my mother. During this time the ministry had lost the majority of its members and decreased to a low of thirty active members. While the ministry was ridiculed, lied about and shunned by many of the former members, it was finally moving forward. It was only until my mother went to an out-of-town revival service that the Lord spoke and told her to pastor the church. Coming back from that revival with courage in her heart, she informed all the members of the church that she would become the Senior Pastor, and carry the mantle and vision her late husband left behind. While this was indeed a challenge, Rev. Teresa D. Tyus pressed on and continued as the pastor.

The ministry went through several ups and downs, but eventually moved out of the school chapel into a building owned by a friend of the family. After a year in the new building, my family had a disagreement with the friend who owned the building; this prompted them to leave and find another location. Unable to find a commercial location, the ministry moved into the basement of a church member's home. Services and fellowship were held there while Rev. Teresa and the church family looked for another

building. However, the church membership dwindled even further during this time to a low of fifteen active members. This was an area where Rev. Teresa had great concern, because it seemed that actual growth and change rarely took place. The pews were not full and the challenge to increase the people's faith was foremost in her heart.

The demographic was still all black with mid to low yearly income. The goal was to have a spiritually mature, racially diverse, economically balanced, family-centered congregation. In 2003, the ministry moved out of the house they were having service in and moved into their own building at 1659 Ransburg Ave. in Columbus, Ohio. This provided the congregants a glimmer of hope for the future. For years the ministry suffered by not owning their own building. This was a good sign of the growth they all believed in from the beginning.

This move brought more questions to be answered: The demographic of the area was White Americans. This area is also known as one of the most racist areas in Columbus, Ohio. Rev. Teresa began working in the ministry having about thirty or forty members. The new church building was a sizable building with a large sanctuary that seated 550 people, with a secretary's office, pastor's study, assistant pastor's study, kitchen, dining hall, nursery, women's lounge, classrooms, library, pantry, and it sat on over three acres of land. This was something the ministry was elated about and caused excitement about new possibilities. She continued to pastor the church, and the church grew to over fifty members. It attracted other races such as White Americans.

Within the Men's Department, none of the men had a strong father figure in their lives. Most of their fathers were absent, unknown, drug or alcohol dependent, imprisoned, physically home but not involved, pimps, dead, non-Christian, or religious,

in that they knew the Bible and led the local church congregations but not their own homes and children. Because of the lack of a male Christian example, most of the men within the ministry did not know how to be a real man. This was the reason father spent so much time with the men in the church and myself. He strove to become that example, but the Lord took him before he finished the assignment.

Following my father's example of spending time with the men in the church became a prominent goal of mine. Growing up without the presence of a father was now part and parcel of my own story. Many of the men struggled in areas of identity, purpose and vision. This only compounded the hurt and confusion in their present families, other social and business relationships. Not having a Godly example, the men led unfocused, insecure and fearful lives. Many suffered from all types of abuse that dramatically impacted their young lives, and now their adult lives.

Today the church primarily consists of black families, with a few White Americans. In total, it consists of 80-100 regularly attending members with about thirteen members additional that attend periodically. Of the 80 to 100 members, 80 are African American and 8 are White American, with 1 African, and 2 Hispanic. Leadership consists of 3 Elders, all 3 are male and 6 Ministers: all 6 females, and 2 deacons, all male. There are additionally 2 Altar Workers: a female and male. The population and demographics of the World Conquerors Through Jesus Christ membership are as follows: 26% between the ages of infant to 17; 25% between 18 and 35; 4.5% between 36 and 42 and 44.5% between 43 years and up.

The 2010 Census reported the city of Columbus Ohio's population as 787,033. The racial demographics for the city is currently 483,677 White; 220,241 Black; 31,965

Asian; 2,105 Indian or Alaskan; 512 Hawaiian; 22,447 belonging to other ethnicities. Of that number 384,265 are males. There are 182,419 people under the age of 18. In 2010, Columbus City schools enrolled over 50,000 students. From that 50,000, an alarming 80% are from low-income families. Only 72% graduated within a four-year term. In 2010-2011 only 55% fifth graders demonstrated basic grade level reading and only 44% demonstrated basic math skills. For eighth graders those numbers were 69% for reading and 48% for math. Columbus received a “continuous improvement” which is the equivalent to a “C” on our state report card.

Synergy

Turn on the television and there are people involved in crimes, sexual immorality, infidelity, fornication, same-sex relationships, violence, and other assorted risky behaviors to captivate the attention of viewers. It is common to see murders, rapes, abuse, and robbery on some tough-guy-kill-everybody movie on every network. Though the people on television are usually actors and actresses, the storyline often comes from real-life drama. Not only in Hollywood do people act out; the majority of people hunger for the limelight or some form of acceptance. A few loyal fans even worship them. The majority of the population seeks fame or notoriety.

Looking deeper into individual situations, people are often searching for something they can pin their name on and call their own. They seek something familiar to give them purpose and identity. What the people in the world are looking for is to find themselves in the world. While they might know what they are in areas of ethnicity,

height, weight, education, titles and so on, it is rare for a person to know why they are in the world, their purpose for existing.

In writing my autobiography and spiritual journey, many feelings were revealed, including deep pain that was turned into useful experiences that birthed understanding. While my pain was essential to my present mentality, it was the wisdom received from those past experiences that really propelled me into my future. What was discovered through this paper was, it was only through dealing with my past pain that an important discovery was made. This discovery is what the entire world is searching for, and that is purpose. Searching for it through many devices and vices, especially during school through displaced anger, it was not discovered until the inspiration of something different was witnessed. Attaining popularity and much-wanted attention, there was still emptiness there. Feeling empty because those roles never fulfilled the void in my heart, it was only through a personal relationship with Jesus Christ that self-realization and actualization materialized. With the help of mentors who displayed a difference, this was a perfect equation for change to manifest in my life.

God-realization was extremely important, and resulted in self-realization. Part of Self-realization involved being truthful with oneself concerning inner feelings, desires and motives; being accountable to past mistakes and judgments; and knowing that being human also implied making mistakes and being imperfect, thus leaving room for growth. Forgiving myself for making mistakes enabled me to capitalize on the growth God had prepared for me.

One of the main facts that synergized my spiritual context and autobiography was father absenteeism. At the age of eight my father died from Colon Cancer, and this

tragedy had a tremendous effect on my life. Growing up without a male role model caused many things to root in my spirit and caused insecurities and fear to reign in life. Being troubled with a self-image of not being as good as others, and the fear of never becoming anyone important, caused me to overcompensate for my lack of self-esteem by engaging in various acts that would feed the void of acceptance.

Self-realization and how to navigate in this world were things a father is supposed to teach a son; to help increase the confidence and faith of self. A father would instill courage and boldness within his son; but all these things were lacking, not because of a bad mother but because of an absent father. This caused an inability to walk through life with purpose and courage, because the only model that was available was my mother. The result was searching for identity and affirmation even if that was through the wrong people. Searching for acceptance and living a life of fear caused me to act out in school by becoming known as the class clown. My mother showed warm love, compassion and taught me the importance of doing the right things in life. Nevertheless, there was not that male presence, the “deep voice of authority,” as one who teaches self-defense, or to just hold his ground in an argument. While mothers are amazing at being loving and nurturing, it is just as important to have a complete balance and have someone who sets boundaries, protects, rears up, and instills a sense of purpose.

We are talking about men from the whole spectrum of society, whose “absence” is creating devastating consequences. Consider two of our nation’s most pressing problems-crime and teenage pregnancy. Researchers now demonstrate that the most reliable predictor of these behaviors has nothing to do with race or income. It is the family structure. Pregnant and delinquent teens come from fatherless homes.²

² Michael O'Donnell, *What A Son Needs From His Dad: How A Man Prepares His Sons For Life* (Ada, MI: Bethany House, 2011), 22.

Fathers provide guidance, counsel, and a sense of family identity, which was one of the many things lacked in my childhood. After writing the spiritual context paper, a discovery was made that from all the men in my context none of them grew up with a father figure. That discovery was amazing; learning the fact that none of the men in my context had father figures. Most of the men's fathers had been physically or emotionally absent; they were drug or alcohol abusers, pimps, dead, unsaved, or in the church but knew the scriptures more than they knew their sons. The emotional effects attributed to an absent father on them were similar to my own. While my father was present, he passed away and the effects of absenteeism are the same.

My father, who was the founder of the context, encouraged the men to further their education and to govern themselves accordingly. He desired for them to be independent, purpose-driven men. "Independence, freedom, autonomy, empowerment, self-direction: in one form or another these have always been seen as the goals of human development and thus of education"³

The male's ages in my context range from twelve to seventy-five. The youngest male was without a father, because his father was incarcerated for several years. When he was released, he was not active in his son's life. The young male deals with anger issues and is often involved in trouble at his school. He was told from the beginning he was a bad kid because he had displaced anger issues. Another young male dealt with many issues including homosexual desires, anger and identity issues, and would often become angry because of his life. His father was not present and his father's father died at a

³ Patricia Cranton, *Professional Development As Transformative Learning: New Perspectives For Teachers Of Adults* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1996), 50.

young age. This suggests men who grow up without fathers often become absent fathers themselves. Without a point of reference, it is hard to be what you have never seen.

Another example is a forty-two year old man in the context. Within the last three years, he joined the assembly. He left behind a life of drugs and alcohol dependency. The drugs and alcohol numbed the pain and frustration that existed in his life. After seeking further understanding of the root cause of these issues, it was later discovered he was fatherless. He looked to his older brother and followed his example. The older brother was involved in drugs and other street activity. Eventually the man partook of that lifestyle as well, which lead him down a long road of consequences that included incarceration, theft, drug and alcohol dependency, instability and lack of identity and vision for his life.

Without the proper guidance of a father, young men go lacking in many areas of life. Another male in my context is an eighty-one year old man. This man is now the oldest active male member in the church, yet he too faced setbacks and suffered from not having a father in his life. Because he did not have a proper male figure in his life, he turned to a reckless life of drugs, sex, and criminal activity. He became a drug dealer; in his time, he was one of the largest drug dealers in Columbus Ohio. He became second-in-command in the area's drug trafficking organization. He later had children of his own that he was not present for until he was older in age.

His father was a drug lord as well and was never around, which led him to the life he lived. As a result of his father being a negative influence and an emotionally hurt person, he persuaded his son to follow in his footsteps. "When people try to function in areas that affect their untended wounds and unhealed hurts, they inevitably hurt others.

Often they wound others as severely as they were hurt, and in remarkably similar ways. While most hurting is relatively mild, deeply wounded people deeply wound others.”⁴

All the men in my context were fatherless, which proved my past was a necessary component in having a real impact in the Men’s Ministry. Going through a fatherless journey provided a deeper understanding of what the men in my context were experiencing. The value of my experience is seen in the sense it was needed to help lead others with similar issues out of their own fatherless circumstances.

Each male has dealt with the crippling grip of fear working against their minds; this prevented them from pursuing and attaining their dreams. For many, their dreams were stillborn and others had died; fear, doubt, criminal records and neighborhood scandals presented a mountain of difficulties on the road to recovery, where their destiny and purpose was derailed. Their fathers were never present and each dealt with the void that comes along with that feeling of neglect.

Many of these men have had trouble in their marriages that bordered on the brink of divorce on several occasions. Without a true model of marriage and raising children, these men did not have a clue what it meant to have a loving, nurturing family life. They only gave what they had: dysfunction and pain. Knowing this gave me insight and knowledge to help guide them down the right path by becoming their mentor. This especially affected the younger men from ages twelve to eighteen. Feeling the need to save the next generation is crucial and needs to be addressed first, because they will be the generation that will create the next generation of men. It is crucial to address them first.

⁴ Sandra Wilson, *Hurt People Hurt People: Hope And Healing For Yourself And Your Relationships* (Grand Rapids, MI: Discovery House, 2001), 10.

Called to pastor hurting men, destiny, not fate, guides my footsteps and calling. It is my purpose to lead them to wellness and wholeness through the same path and pain experienced in my own life. Truly, it was not an overnight experience leading to this great discovery. It was forged through constantly seeking after God. It was also a constant shedding of old mentalities. Seeking the approval of others is what many of these young men are facing as well, they need guidance, a father figure, and they need a mentor.

Another character trait lodged in the souls of these men in my context was the lacked of inspiration. They did not grow up with an inspiring male influence to motivate and show them it was honorable being a man of integrity, a good man even in a crooked society. They lacked an authoritative figure inspiring them to set high goals, think outside the box, and be the exception to the rule, not just going through the motions and meeting the expectations of others. The men of our culture need to be developed. If men become exceptional many of life's issues would be settled. With proper fatherhood, crime would decrease, teen pregnancies would decrease, the murder rate would decline and communities would thrive. This should happen early in childhood and development. It is less difficult to solve an issue at an early stage, than dealing with deep roots of an elderly man suffering from childhood trauma, which is one of the reasons for focusing on pre-teens and teenagers.

Michael O'Donnell describes in his book just how early a child's development starts and states, "As a former professor of human development and family studies for Abilene Christian University, I had always reminded my students that nearly 85 percent

of a child's personality is formed by the time he or she is six years old.”⁵ He later described the importance of picking the right church to help with the upbringing of a child.

“The church you choose to attend while your son is growing up is another major influence you will want to consider carefully...Does it emphasize affection and forgiveness, or promote a works-oriented spirituality where a person strives to merit or earn God's love and approval?”⁶ While the church's purpose is not to raise children, it is there to reinforce what should already be taught at home. Coming to church should only confirm what the children are already learning at home. These things come together in my life as well, because our mission statement is, “Reconciling our families back to God.” Steering men towards Jesus Christ helped me to further discover God for myself. It was through these actions and simple biblical principles they would be drawn to. They would influence their own surroundings, workplaces, families, and communities.

A program was implemented geared towards young men of color suffering from father absenteeism. Discovering self-identity is essential to the fulfillment of purpose and fulfillment in life. A project was implemented to mentor young men with daily principles that will aid young fatherless black males in their pursuit of themselves, their relationships with their single mothers, and self-awareness concerning the need of positive men in the lives of other men. The synergy between the spiritual autobiography and context is simply focused on men discovering their true identity, purpose, relationship with others, and awareness. This took place under this mentoring program,

⁵ Ibid., 43.

⁶ Ibid.

which was a catalyst for young men to be inspired and developed in their God given gifts and purpose in life as men.

CHAPTER TWO

BIBLICAL FOUNDATION

The two scriptures exegeted in these biblical foundations are Prov. 22:6 and Eph. 6:4. These two scriptures present a compelling foundation for a biblical stance on the need for proper parenting and fatherhood.

In every part of the world there are individuals who suffer because of the lack of proper guidance and upbringing. What is the right way to train children? Is childrearing not up to interpretation, or is there a solid factual biblical way to act out this duty? How important is a parent in a child's life? How important is it for a parent to train their children in the ways of God? What are the stipulations for children who were not trained properly? What does scripture say about raising children? While this document will touch heavily on parenting, the primary focus will be on the importance of fathering children.

Old Testament: Proverbs 22:6

Prov. 22:6 says, "Train up a child in the way he should go, even when he is old he will not depart from it." American Standard Version (ASV)

Biblical scholar Adam Clarke's commentary on this scripture touches on the importance of parenting and training our children in the way they should go. Clarke digs

deeper into the meaning of the words chosen for this passage by King Solomon and talks about when parents should begin training their children.

Clarke points out the fact that timing is just as important as training. Clarke encourages the reader to understand parents should start early in training their children. Initiate the child at the opening (the mouth) of his path. When he comes to the opening of the way of life, being able to walk alone, and to choose, stop at this entrance, and begin a series of instructions, how he is to conduct himself in every step he takes. Show him the duties, the dangers, and the blessings of the path; give him directions to perform the duties, how to escape the dangers, and how to secure the blessings which all lie before him.¹

Clarke gives a deeper perspective on the passage and speaks about the dangers of life and how the training of the parent is essential to the proper rearing of children. Many people often train thinking of the good times in life, but few look and train to handle to tough hard times of life. Clarke points out the Hebrew word *Chanok*, which means “dedication” and speaks about it being essential to training children.

Chanok, which we translates “train up or initiate,” signifies also “dedicate,” and is often used for the consecrating of any thing, house, or person, to the service of God. Dedicate, therefore, in the first instance, your child to God, and nurse, teach, and discipline him as God’s child, whom he has entrusted to your care. These things observed, and illustrated by your own conduct, the child (you have God’s word for it) will never depart from the path of life.²

¹ *Adam Clarke's Commentary On The Bible*, (Electronic Database, 2006), 1831, Biblesoft Inc.

² Ibid.

Clarke pushes the influence of a Godly parent who can motivate their children in the way and service of God. Disciplining them as children of God is important to Clarke. He says those that train their children in this fashion have a promise from God that their children will never depart from their trainings.

In the world we live in there are countless news stories referring to crime and other behavior that would make many people cringe. Could the root issue of a broken person be due to the fact that the individual was a broken child? If a broken foundation diminishes the capability of a structure truly becoming all it is designed to be, can we not say the same for humanity? So maybe the problem is not found in human adulthood but rather human childhood.

Could it be many of our problems stem from such a young place in our lives? Could it be we were not trained with a spirit of love and in the admiration of the Lord as children because our parents were not trained in these things themselves as youth? King Solomon, who the bible recognizes as the wisest man of his time (Chron. 9:2), pushes the fact that parents should train their children up properly. If someone whom the bible claims to be a wise person pushes this fact there must be some validity to the statement. Maybe Solomon's cry for the importance of training our children runs deeper.

Solomon is very honest and forward when it comes to this passage, which makes the reader wonder what is behind it. Could it be that Solomon has a personal reference of the importance of training up children properly, or a time when he strayed? Matthew Henry, who is a world-renowned biblical scholar, touches a little on this.

"Many indeed have departed from the good way in which they were trained up; Solomon himself did so. But early training may be a means of their recovering

themselves, as it is supposed Solomon did.”³ Henry touches on the seriousness of hope for the next generation. He speaks as if the future hangs on what methods the parents taught their own children. As generations seem to get worse as time goes forward could it be due to the fact of improper parenting and further improper fatherhood in children’s lives?

Henry touches further on the subject by incorporating other passages of scripture to back up his claim of the importance of training your children. He uses an interesting word, *Catechize*, which means to give religious instruction by questions and answers. *Catechize* them; initiate them; keep them under discipline. Train them as soldiers, who are taught to handle their arms, keep rank, and observe the word of command. Train them up, not in the way they would go (the bias of their corrupt hearts would draw them aside), but in the way they should go, the way in which, if you love them, you would have them go. Train up a child according as he is capable (as some take it), with a gentle hand, as nurses feed children, little and often (Deut. 6:7).⁴

Henry encourages parents to undergird their children with a gentle hand, almost as nurses feed children. Children are the next generation and what parents teach them will dictate how the future will be formed. So this takes the blame out of the children’s hands and places it into the parent’s. Solomon tells the parents to train up their own children, he did not instruct the children to train themselves. So there is great responsibility on parents and the way they choose to bring up their children. When we see a nurse feeding children they are generally kind, gentle, and very peaceful. All their attention seems to be on the

³ *Matthew Henry's Commentary On The Whole Bible*. (Electronic Database, 2006), 1706, Biblesoft Inc.

⁴ Ibid.

child. There is no self-involvement in the feeding process. Their whole mindset is on the child getting all the nutrients they can get from the process.

Henry mentions something that is interesting. He says to train them up as he is capable, implying that every child is different and supplying for them individually according to their abilities is crucial for their development. Henry points out the importance of the individuality of the child, this must mean it is just as important for the parent to know the child personally. It is in fact impossible to raise someone as an individual and not know them personally. Henry pushes the readers to understand that parents must spend time with their children learning their individual personalities and purpose. The child's purpose is in the hands of the parents, because it is left up to the parents to navigate them in the right direction and train them according to their individual personalities and gifting. The International Standard Version of the bible supports Henry's claim about child individuality, "Train a child in the way appropriate for him, and when he becomes older, he will not turn from it." Prov. 22:6 (ISV)

The International Standard Version of the bible seems to highlight not only training up a child but rather makes it more specific in the sense that each child has their own destiny and the same way is not necessarily appropriate for every child. The word appropriate seems to point out the fact that there is also an inappropriate way of raising children and parents must find which way is the right way for each individual child. The *Living Bible* points out for the parent to teach a child to choose the right path. This reference puts more weight on the parent making sure the child understands what is right to do on this journey called life. While it is true the child may choose the path, it is important for the parent to set a proper course for them to walk. *The Message Bible*

encourages parents to point their children in the right direction and once they become older they will not be lost. So, if it is the parent's job to point their children in the right direction to go, this must mean the parents must themselves have a sense of direction, be visionaries, and know the proper way to go. So the transcript of *The Message Bible* encourages the parents to live lives that are honest and true to what they are teaching their children.

It is essential that parents understand the importance of living by example. Children are likely to live what they see. Parents must have their own experience in right living in order to become expert enough to show their children the correct path. It is impossible for the parent to effectively teach or train what they themselves do not live.

The Pulpit Commentary does a great job in breaking down the word train. Train up a child in the way he should go. The verb translated train (chanok) means, first, to put something into the mouth, to give to be tasted, as nurses give to infants food which they have masticated in order to prepare it for their nurslings; thence it comes to signify to give elementary instruction, to imbue, to train. The Hebrew literally is, initiate a child in accordance with his way. The Authorized Version, with which Ewald agrees, takes the maxim to mean that the child should be trained from the first in the right path—the path of obedience and religion.⁵

The Pulpit Commentary later goes deeper and dissects the difference in the meaning of “the way he should go.”

This is a very true and valuable rule, but it is not what the author intends. “His way” must mean one of two things—either his future calling and station, or his character and natural inclination and capacity. Delitzsch and Plumptre take the latter interpretation; Nowack and Bertheau the former, on the ground that derek is

⁵ *The Pulpit Commentary*, (Electronic Database, 2006), 1890, Biblesoft Inc.

not used in the other sense suggested. But, as far as use is concerned, both explanations stand on much the same ground; and it seems more in conformity with the moralist's age and nation to see in the maxim an injunction to consider the child's nature, faculties, and temperament, in the education which is given to him.⁶

If the child is trained up correctly according to their gifting and calling, they will grow older and will not depart from their upbringing and their lives will become fruitful. This is important because this shines the light on the importance of parents making sure they train their children up properly. The fathers must be present to provide a foundation for their children and must live what they teach in their homes. It falls back on the parents in showing their children their purpose. King Solomon emphasizes the importance of the parents knowing their children's destinies, personalities and knowing how to mold and shape them into who they were destined to become in life. These commentaries and views from other scholars concerning this scripture really focus on training and teaching children from a young age. *The Amplified Bible* speaks on learning the child's gift and teaching in a way that is catered to the child's individual calling.

In order for parents to know and understand the gifts and calling of children, they must, 1) spend much time learning and studying the child and, 2) seek God for guidance on how to mold, shape, and cultivate them into who they are to become. Helping the children learn their gifting is an essential factor in helping them find their purpose. Once the gift is found, there lies their place of service, fulfillment, and purpose.

Parents are to know their children's purpose or at least their place of gifting before the child does. Finding your purpose is crucial to being fulfilled in life. This scripture implies that everyone has a gift starting from childhood and it is the parent's job to find it and cultivate it from at a young age. Through many comments from various

⁶ Ibid.

commentators and biblical scholars, it is evident that parents are needed in teaching and training their children. While we have dealt with parents as a whole, it is essential that fathers ensure their children are loved, nurtured, and trained. It is fathers who are the foundation of the family. Without a proper foundation any building will collapse. It is crucial for the male to be present in the child's life. If not, the child needs a male figure or mentor to aid in the development process. The father being the head of the house and the foundation of the family, it is his duty to ensure the upbringing of his children in a way that only he can.

New Testament: Ephesians 6:4

Eph. 6:4 follows Prov. 22:6 by stating, "Fathers, do not irritate and provoke your children to anger [do not exasperate them to resentment], but rear them [tenderly] in the training and discipline and the counsel and admonition of the Lord."⁷ Eph. 6:4 (Amplified Bible)

This scripture is important because it highlights the importance of fathers taking their rightful place in their children's lives as trainers, counselors, and teachers. This passage puts a stipulation on the success of the father training the child in the ways of the Lord. The catch is the father must learn and know the ways of the Lord himself. It is extremely hard to teach something you do not know yourself. So, the father must take up his own cross and follow Christ, not only for himself, but also for future generations.

The Biblical Illustrator does a great job speaking about the importance of child training. "A strict and virtuous education of youth is absolutely necessary to a man's

⁷ Ibid.

attainment of that inestimable blessing, that unspeakable felicity, of being serviceable to his God, easy to himself and useful to others in the whole course of his following life. To the proof of this, lay down six propositions.”⁸

John Wesley touches on this passage and points out that the parents are not solely responsible for wayward children. In fact, there are many good parents with children who are bad decision makers. There are many children living today that had good parents but the children choose to live a different life. Wesley makes sure he points this out to the reader. Not to redirect the focus, Wesley makes sure the reader understands that because of humanity’s sinful nature and corrupted lives we need guidance and instruction. All of us are in need of a savior and teaching. Wesley says, “But what is the way wherein a child should go? And how shall we ‘train him up’ therein? The ground of this is admirably well laid by Mr. Law, in his ‘Serious Call to a Devout Life.’ William Law notes, ‘Had we continued perfect as God created the first man, perhaps the perfection of our nature had been a sufficient self-instructor for everyone. But as sickness and diseases have created the necessity of medicines and physicians, so the disorders of our rational nature have introduced the necessity of education and tutors.’”⁹

Wesley points out a serious point from Law in his comment concerning humanity and our sin nature and our need for education and training. He later goes on to describe the need for the guidance of God and praises prolific scholars such as Socrates. Informing the reader that teachers like Socrates have helped humanity with their teachings. While Wesley praises the great tutors and scholars of history, he also makes sure the reader

⁸ *The Biblical Illustrator*, (Electronic Database, 2006), 2011, Ages Software Inc. and Biblesoft Inc.

⁹ *Sermons of John Wesley*, (PC Study Bible Formatted Electronic Database, 2006), 1123, Biblesoft Inc.

understands the importance of man learning from God, their creator. If fathers learn from an infinite being such as God the realization of their true potential is endless, thus they are able to teach their children the ways of God. Learning from teachers is good, but learning from God fearing teachers is better. It is especially important when those teachers are made to be the forerunners of your lives, such as parents. Wesley goes on to describe the sin nature as a disease that only the true physician, which is God can heal.

Let it be carefully remembered all this time, that God, not man, is the physician of souls; that it is He, and none else, who giveth medicine to heal our natural sickness; that all ‘the help which is done upon earth, he doeth it himself;’ that none of all the children of men is able to ‘bring a clean thing out of an unclean;’ and, in a word, that ‘it is God who worketh in us, both to will and to do of his good pleasure.’ But is generally his pleasure to work by his creatures; to help man by man. He honors men to be, in a sense, ‘workers together with him.’ By this means the reward is ours, while the glory redounds to him.¹⁰

Wesley goes on to further describe the sin nature and poses a question, he states, “This being premised, in order to see distinctly what is that way wherein we should train up a child, let us consider, What are the diseases of his nature? What are those spiritual diseases which every one that is born of a woman brings with him into the world?”¹¹ With our sin nature it is important to have proper guidance, training, and education in the lives of children. With the responsibility where the children ultimately choose the right path, it is essential for the parents to first know God themselves and to train their children in the ways of God from a young age. This way, the chances are higher for the children having fruitful productive lives. Wesley goes on to instruct and encourage the parents to stay strong in their teachings and informing them of the importance of their roles.

Many parents connive likewise at the ill-nature of their children, and thereby strengthen it. But truly affectionate parents will not indulge them in any kind or

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

degree of unmercifulness. They will not suffer them to vex their brothers or sisters, either by word or deed... Ye that are truly kind parents, in the morning, in the evening, and all the day beside, press upon all your children, 'to walk in love, as Christ also loved us, and gave himself for us;' to mind that one point, "God is love; and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him."¹²

Pointing out the importance of loving your children is a crucial factor in the healthy development of your children. Wesley points out that training them in this type of love will only connect them more with God, who is love. Teaching children early in the ways of the Lord is essential to their inner development as people. Instructing them as individuals, learning their gifts and callings, and being a loving example is crucial to training up a child in the way they should go in order to be successful. Then the parents must be present in the children's lives, encouraging them to have an ear connected to God for guidance on how to train his creation. Absent parents are not able to properly train their children.

Without a proper parental figure (who does not have to be biological), it is nearly impossible for children to teach themselves and almost always ends in destruction. Further, a spiritually absent parent is crucial to the development of children. Training a child means the trainer must first be trained. Only when the trainer is trained are they equipped with the ability to train others.

Eph. 6:4 is crucial and shows the importance of children having a proper parent in their lives. Having a father who is focused on his children's spiritual, emotional, and mental development by being focused on bettering himself in the same areas for his children is essential. A father being the foundation of the home must be the first partaker of these things and lead his family into truth. The father must live himself as a living example of what he wants his children to become. Children will follow an example more

¹² Ibid.

than verbal demands from their fathers. Through love, kindness, guidance, cultivation, and discipline the father should show their children the proper way of living. By helping them find their individual gift with the foundation and principles of the Lord, fathers can assure their children will be fruitful in their lives and will not turn from their childhood foundational teachings. Paying individual attention to each child and their character will help the parent understand how to train their individual children.

Each child has an individual gift and calling, the parent is supposed to realize that gift first in order to help the child recognize it, while in the process learning the laws and love of the divine gift giver. In today's society it is common to hear about parents who are absent from their children's lives. Emotional and physically absent parenting is often said to have a large effect on children in a negative way. We have read earlier of the importance of parents training their children and that it reached much further than just teaching them the ways of God. It was discovered that each child has an individual purpose and gifting and their teaching and training must be catered to their personal calling and purpose. Therefore, parents are responsible for actively helping their children discover their individual God-given gifts and purposes. Being a long distance non-engaged parent is not enough for true training to take place. The parent is called to be in constant contact with God for the purpose and calling of their children, and to bring out the best in them through training them as individuals.

The book of Ephesians was written by the Apostle Paul in A.D. 60-61 to strengthen the church of Ephesus, which Paul had visited in times past. Ephesus was located in Asia Minor, which is modern day Turkey. Ephesus was a large populated city with great attraction. It was the capital of the Roman province of Asia. While Paul was

imprisoned in Rome, this letter was written to help build the already budding church in Ephesus that Paul himself once ministered to. Paul at this time encouraged the church through this letter to remain on task in doing good works. “Any, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but nurture them in the chastening and the admonition of the Lord.” Eph. 6:4 (American Standard Version)

What made Paul in this passage focus on the importance of fatherhood? What caused him to focus on bringing up children properly? This scripture in particular seems to be geared towards the importance of fathers nurturing their children. While the male is not the only authoritative figure who is able to help hold up the household, this scripture seems to encourage fathers to take their rightful place within their household. Being the foundation of the family, it is the father’s responsibility to keep the household intact and grounded.

Albert Barnes, who was a dedicated student of the bible, states this as the importance of the father’s responsibility in relation to correction and order of the children.

This is a command addressed particularly to “fathers,” because they are at the head of the family, and its government is especially committed to them. The object of the apostle here is, to show parents their commands should be such that they can be easily obeyed, or such as are entirely reasonable and proper. If children are required to “obey,” it is but reasonable that the commands of the parent should be such that they can be obeyed, or such that the child shall not be discouraged in his attempt to obey.¹³

Barnes makes sure the reader understands that the father’s instructions should be at a level that a child could understand and further obey. He goes further and states,

¹³ Albert Barnes, *Notes On The Old and New Testaments*, (Electronic Database, 2006), 1832, Biblesoft Inc.

“...it is the duty of children to obey a parent; but it is the duty of a parent to exhibit such a character, and to maintain such a government, that it would be proper for the child to obey; to command nothing that is unreasonable or improper, but to train up his children in the ways of virtue and pure religion.”¹⁴

The responsibility falls on the father to even guide the child in the ways they should respond to discipline and the discipline that is displayed should be done in love and not in anger. Barnes touches on this topic in this passage by informing the father on the way the child will receive his instructions if it is done in anger versus love.

When a parent is evidently excited about when he punishes a child. The child then feels: that if his father is angry, it is not wrong for him to be angry; and the very fact of anger in a parent kindles anger in his bosom-just as it does when two men are contending. If he submits in the case, it is only because the parent is the strongest, not because he is right, and the child cherishes anger, while he yields to power.¹⁵

A child respecting their parents and receiving their love versus their anger is crucial to the development of the child. Knowing and understanding the parent's love seems to be an unmovable need in the upbringing and development in the child's life.

There is no principle of parental government more important than that a father should command his own temper when he inflicts punishment. He should punish a child not because he is angry, but because it is right; not because it has become a matter of personal contest, but because God requires that he should do it, and the welfare of the child demands it.¹⁶

From this understanding, not provoking your children to wrath greatly depends on the intent and spirit in which the father disciplines. It is out of love only that the child should be disciplined and thus inwardly the child should understand, see, and feel that

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

love. Understanding Eph. 6:4, one sees it goes so much further than keeping your children from becoming angry, but instructs the ‘father’ to discipline out of love and not anger. Barnes interpretation demonstrates the child must have an inherent connection to their father in order to know his true intent behind the correction, if it is out of love or, spite and anger. Once again we see children becoming what they see and experience from a parent, in this case, the father(s). The father has an important role to teach and train their children from a place of love. *The Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament* notes this passage is one of the few that demonstrate the importance of a father’s role in the child’s life. The dictionary also translates the original Greek, which peels back another layer in the passage.

“Eph. 6:4 contains the only exhortation in the domestic code addressed to fathers: ...do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up ktre/fete in the discipline and admonition of the Lord n paidei/a| kai\ nouqesi/a| kuri/ou kuri/ou characterizes discipline and admonition as Christian acts paidei/a. The writer associates paidei/a, more with fatherly guidance, instruction, and teaching, and less with “discipline” (J. Gniska, Eph [HTKNT] ad loc.).¹⁷

Looking deeper into the meanings of these words in this passage, there is further evidence of what the words actually mean in older languages. “Nurture” in the Greek means “paideia (pahee-di’-ah) tutorage, i.e. education or training; by implication, disciplinary correction.”¹⁸ This shows to nurture children the parents must train, tutor, and educate them by implication and disciplinary correction. Additionally, “bring up” in the Greek means, “ektrepho (ek-tref’-o); from NT:1537 and NT:5142; to rear up to maturity,

¹⁷ *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*, (Electronic Database, 1990), 1724, Biblesoft.

¹⁸ *New Exhaustive Strong's Concordance With Expanded Greek-Hebrew Dictionary*, (Electronic Database, 2006), 1292, Biblesoft, Inc. & International Bible Translators, Inc.

i.e. (genitive case) to cherish or train.”¹⁹ In Greek terms, then, in order to bring someone up properly there needs to be an act of training, cherishment, and love. Love is more than being a provider, but rather is identified with time spent with, affection, and cultivation. The love from a father in a child’s life is undeniably important and proves to be an essential component of the child’s upbringing. Love encourages and further helps the child in becoming ultimately who they were created to be. It helps them in finding their own gifting and purpose.

What we see so far is the Apostle Paul encouraging fathers to ultimately love their children to health, through discipline that encourages and not diminishes. He instructs fathers to train them up unto maturity, which includes rebuke and discipline in the ways of the Lord. How can a father teach and discipline from a loving place when they themselves do not have it or never experienced it? Are we as a society asking too much from men? Are we asking men to be something they themselves never experienced? This passage encourages fathers to bring “up” their children. Is it too much to think that many fathers in today’s society and culture bring their children down and are not presently positively active in their lives and upbringing?

It is almost as if Paul also suggests that fathers are going to be present in their children’s lives. In our culture today it is more common to see fathers that are not present than those that are. Further exploration into this almost seems as if it is a given that fathers should be in their children’s lives. This passage being written around A.D. 62, children were told to honor their parents and taught to obey them as well.

¹⁹ Ibid.

Many Jews in this time believed that honoring your parents was the most important commandment. Honor was culturally important to fathers and their families. Unfortunately, according to Craig S. Keener,

At the same time, children were often taught through beating, which was standard in child rearing and education; fathers were considered responsible for their education. Paul is among the minority of ancient writers who seem to disapprove of excessive discipline (6:4). Greek and Roman society was even harsher on newborn children; because an infant was accepted as a legal person only when the father officially recognized it, babies could be abandoned or, if deformed, killed. Early Christians and Jews unanimously opposed both abortion and abandonment. This text, however, addresses the discipline of minors in the household.²⁰

Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown's commentary breaks down each phrase in this passage and further solidifies the fact that fathers are to be the ones training, loving, encouraging, and disciplining their children. Not taking away from the mothers who also play an important role, but just as special as the mother is, the father is as well. The authors encourage fathers to control themselves when disciplining their children so it will not be done in anger but rather in love.

And – superiors also have duties to the inferiors. Fathers – including mothers. The fathers are specified, as being the fountains of domestic authority. Fathers are more prone to passion toward their children than mothers, whose fault is rather over-indulged. Provoke not – by vexatious commands, unreasonable blame, and uncertain temper Col 3:21, “lest they be discouraged.” Nurture – ‘discipline;’ namely, training by chastening in act where needed (Job 5:17; Hebrews 12:7). Admonition, [nouthesia] – training by words (Deuteronomy 6:7; Proverbs 22:6, margin, ‘catechize’), whether of encouragement, remonstrance, or reproof. Of the Lord – such as the Lord approves, and by His Spirit dictates.²¹

As they break this down we see the common thread in all the commentaries on this passage, which is fathers must be careful in how they discipline their children. We

²⁰ Craig S. Keener, *IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament*, (Electronic Database, 1993), 732, Biblesoft Inc.

²¹ Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset and David Brown, *Commentary Critical And Explanatory On The Whole Bible* (Electronic Database, 2006), 1871, Biblesoft Inc.

see they all point to the fact that fathers must encourage their children and be careful from the place that they discipline and chastise them.

According to these writers, the Apostle Paul is also saying children are able to pick up the true intent and spirit behind a father's discipline. This is the reason why it should always be done in a spirit of love, not to provoke them to be angry but to love.

Mathew Henry urges that the parents should remember their children are in reality pieces of them, and they must be patient with them. Henry states,

The duty of parents: And you fathers, v. 4. Or, you parents, 1. "Do not provoke your children to wrath. Though God has given you power, you must not abuse that power, remembering that your children are, in a particular manner, pieces of yourselves, and therefore ought to be governed with great tenderness and love. Be not impatient with them, use no unreasonable severities and lay no rigid injunctions upon them. When you caution them, when you counsel them, when you reprove them, do it in such a manner as not to provoke them to wrath. In all such cases deal prudently and wisely with them, endeavoring to convince their judgments and to work upon their reason."²²

What would life be like without the true guidance of parents, without true loving discipline? The commentators are stating that without the parent's upbringing the children would grow up guideless and without true correction. So is it safe to say a life without a father is a life without correction and guidance?

If true guidance and correction is love, is it safe to say that children without fathers grow up without a piece of love? While they may receive love and guidance from their mother, it is clearly instructed that the father should nurture children and discipline them in love. In the crucial foundational stages of a toddler, to the confused stages of a pre-teen, to the authority-defiant self-discovering stages of a teen, what would life be like without the correction, love and nurture of a father? Children who grow up without a

²² *Matthew Henry's Commentary On The Whole Bible*, (Electronic Database, 2006), 1706, Biblesoft Inc.

father figure during these crucial developmental years of life, do they suffer with a sense of lack? Do they feel purposeless and gift-less? A father is crucial to a child's life and it is his job to bring them up properly.

Henry confirms this, and states,

Bring them up well, in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, in the discipline of proper and of compassionate correction, and in the knowledge of that duty which God requires of them and by which they may become better acquainted with him. Give them a good education." It is the great duty of parents to be careful in the education of their children: "Not only bring them up, as the brutes do, taking care to provide for them; but bring them up in nurture and admonition, in such a manner as is suitable to their reasonable natures. Nay, not only bring them up as men, in nurture and admonition, but as Christians, in the admonition of the Lord. Let them have a religious education. Instruct them to fear sinning; and inform them of, and excite them to, the whole of their duty towards God."²³

Henry also states the importance of not only bringing up your sons as men but also as men who reverence the Lord and are Christians. This responsibility falls on fathers, and it is a responsibility that God gave them. It is a father's job to excite their children about the ways, laws, and precepts of the Lord. It is their job to encourage their children and train them in the ways of the Lord. The father in many ways is the sculptor as the children represent the clay. It is their job to fashion them into the men and women of God that the Holy Spirit has called them to be.

Often fathers can become very passionate, as was stated earlier, and at times can even be angry and aggressive. To the contrary, Paul encourages fathers to do all disciplinary acts in love. If done in love, the children will grow up understanding the discipline and will not resent it, but rather understand it and know it to be true. Fathers understand that God knows the difference between discipline and making ones child a whipping post. All acts of discipline must be done in love and tenderness. In order to

²³ Ibid.

properly discipline the children the fathers must themselves know their own children and their ways. In our society it is common to see abusive fathers, fathers who blame their children for every negative act that is done in the household. If a father would take time out with their children, teaching them, loving them, caring for them and nurturing them, they themselves would have a better understanding of the intent of the child. They would be able to properly discipline them with love and guidance when needed. This takes physical time being spent with their children to make this kind of discipline effective. How can a father properly love a child he does not spend time with?

Relationships are built based on good communication. If the father never communicates with the child it is impossible for him to know them, their ways, their gifting, or their struggles. In order to properly correct and rear their children, the father must be connected to the child and connected to the Lord for guidance. This passage encourages the father to train their children up in the admonition and ways of the Lord. The father must know the Lord's ways in order to teach them to their children. So a proper father knows the Lord and his ways.

The McClintock and Strong Encyclopedia states one of the many meanings of father in the bible,

The author, source, or beginner of anything is also called the father of the same, or of those who follow him. Thus Jabal is called "the father of those who dwell in tents, and have cattle;" and Jubal "the father of all — such as handle the harp and the organ" (Genesis 4:21, 22; comp. Job 38:28; John 8:44; Romans 4:12). In the Talmud the term father is used to indicate the chief; e.g. the principal of certain works are termed "fathers." Objects whose contact causes pollution are called "fathers" of defilement (Mishna, Shabb. 7:2, volume 2, page 29; Pesach, 1:6, volume 2, page 137, Surenh.). This use of the word is exceedingly common in the East to this day, especially as applied in the formation of proper names, in which also the most curious Hebrew examples of this usage occur.²⁴

²⁴ *McClintock and Strong Encyclopedia*, (Electronic Database, 2006) 2013, Biblesoft Inc.

If the word “father” means author, source, or beginner as Strong states, this means their children are products of themselves. So fathers must hold themselves up to the same standards they wish their children to hold to. In a very real sense this states that their children will become them. So if a father is absent, it is a chance his children will become the same, unless another figure steps in to correct the wrong of the first father figure. If a father is abusive, there is a high chance their children will become abusive. Just as humanity suffers from the wrong from the first “Adam” who fell, it took a second Adam- “Christ”-to give us a new perspective and model for us how to do what is right. Christ became our example to follow a good model instead of a fallen one. A good model had to be shown in order for us to have a chance to choose the right path. Humanity almost had no choice but to fall because their first father “Adam” was a broken model. It was only when a better one, “Christ,” stepped in to take the place of the original model that humanity was able to choose which father (model) they would follow.

Throughout all the commentaries it is important for fathers to take their place in the children’s lives by training them up in the way they should go. Fathers should entreat their children with love and discipline and correct them with the attitude of love and gentleness. Fathers should rear their children; connect to God in order to know how to train them up in their individual gifting and calling. The father is the author, creator, and the beginning. They should take such pride in properly bringing their children up that they challenge themselves to be the model their children can follow and strive to become. Teaching by example is the father’s role and duty for the purpose of proper rearing. Being present, training and nurturing them in the ways of the Lord is key to a successful

child. Paul understood the importance of Eph. 6:4. There is purpose behind why it was written.

CHAPTER THREE

HISTORICAL FOUNDATION

The rise of absentee fathers is at an all-time high. Absentee fathers have risen from generation to generation. In what ways do absent father's effect children in today's society? Is it true that growing up fatherless has negative repercussions to it? What does history say about this issue? What new insights have been discovered? In today's culture, hearing of a child that lives solely with their mother almost has a 'shrug of the shoulder' response. It is no longer shocking for many to hear that an adolescent teen is having complications within the school system because of a broken home. In many cases it is not even a shocker to see only mothers attending parent-teacher conferences without their male counterpart. Have we become that desensitized to the fact that fathers are never around? Have we become so desensitized to absent fathers that when we hear about it, it no longer affects us?

When one thinks of the family structure what usually comes to mind is a father, mother, and children. Society has painted a picture of the family structure with the very strong present father active in the children's life; the protector, provider, nurturer, guide, and always present. Along with the mother, that is the one who shows much love, gentleness, compassion, and is present in the lives of the children.

The image of the parents is painted as loving towards one another with great respect and honor given by both father and mother with a nucleus of love. Sadly in the

world we live in today, this image of family rarely exists and is becoming an extinct structure. It is rare to find a family with this type of structure. This love unit has fallen drastically and seemingly gets worst from generation to generation. Primarily this issue seems to take place because one unit is no longer present, the father. Without that protection and guidance, where will the family go? Without the visionary how will the family see? Without the sower how will the family grow? This issue is a cross-cultural epidemic that plagues the entire planet, but seems to be more prevalent in African American culture. Why is it that so many of our black males have left their roles as the head of the household? Why is it that so many of our black males impregnate women then leave them only to live unfulfilled purposeless lives?

While many black males are positive role models for their communities, it is a large overwhelming number of them that refuse to take their rightful place as men. Many of these issues stem from the fact that many of them have not had fathers or positive role models in their lives to show them different. Is it that they are just acting out what they have seen? Are we asking too much of the black male? Seeing that we as people can only produce what we have, have known, or have experienced ourselves? We will take a deeper look into the lives of fatherless men especially focusing on the black male and why they suffer from these issues. This document will show the historical, current aspect and evidence of the issues that lied before, currently, and that lay ahead for our black men.

The National Fatherhood Initiative, which was founded in 1994 by Don Eberly, a former White House advisor, met with other scholars to address a growing issue, which was absent fathers in our communities. National Fatherhood Initiative was birthed to help

the issue of father absenteeism. On their website they state, “According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 24 million children in America—one out of three—live in biological father-absent homes. Consequently, there is a father factor in nearly all of the social issues facing America today.”¹ Eberly started this foundation on these 4 principles issues, 1) Fathers make unique and irreplaceable contributions to the lives of children, 2) Father’s absence produce negative outcomes for children, 3) Societies which fail to reinforce a cultural ideal of responsible fatherhood get increasing amounts of father absence, 4) Widespread fatherlessness is the most socially consequential problem of our time.²

With these problems stated, what is the future of fatherless men? Through this we see it is not just the men that are affected by the emotional infection of fatherlessness, but everything around the infected man is affected as well. The communities, households, and the world socially are affected as a whole. Studies have shown that men who grow up fatherless are not only mentally and emotionally scarred, but they are affected economically as well. The U.S. Census Bureau states, “Children in father-absent homes are almost four times more likely to be poor. In 2011, 12 percent of children in married-couple families were living in poverty, compared to 44 percent of children in mother-only families.”³

In 2008, American poverty rates were 13.2% for the whole population and 19% for children, compared to 28.7% for female-headed households. Studies show that there was a 5% increase in child poverty from the years of 1970-1996 that was

¹ “Statistics And Data On The Consequences Of Father Absence,” Fatherhood.org, accessed July 1, 2013, <http://www.fatherhood.org/about/organization-history>.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

nearly all attributed to the rise in one parent homes, with a strong emphasis on unmarried mothers.⁴

These studies clearly show the impact single parent homes have on the economic status of children. Is it true fathers have that much impact on the economic state of their children? Fathers are the backbone, foundation, and nurturer of the family. Without his guidance, the impact on children's lives can be essentially negative to society.

Increasingly, fatherhood has become a volunteer commitment. In 1990 more than one in four of all births was to an unmarried woman, a fivefold increase in 30 years, according to the Census Bureau. Today nearly a quarter of children born in this country live in female-headed households. More than half of all children in the United States can expect to live in such households before they turn 18.⁵

This issue of absent fathers is expanding at a rapid rate nationwide. If this is true, there are countless young boys living at home today without the guidance of a biological father. This issue is not limited to culture or ethnicity, but is prevalent in all races and creeds in this country. Few men are willing to step up to the plate and fill in the gap for fatherless men and become mentors and positive role models in fatherless boys lives. Oftentimes it is not the fact that the children's fathers are not alive, but simply not around.

Being raised by a single mother does not automatically deprive a child of a father, but 40 percent of kids who live in female-headed households haven't seen their fathers in at least a year. Of the remaining 60 percent, only a fifth sleep even one night a month in their father's home. Even fewer see their father at least once a week, according to a study by Frank F. Furstenberg Jr. and Kathleen Mullan Harris, both of University of Pennsylvania.⁵

What is the cause for the drop rate from fatherhood in the nation? "Fatherlessness itself is not the main problem; there are plenty fathers. The problem is the loss of father

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

love. In its deeper dimensions, father love is nurturing, community building, and spiritually powerful. But at its most fundamental level, father love is expressed through a man's daily involvement with his family."⁶ Children in fatherless homes also suffer with academic struggles as well. "Almost twice as many high-achievers come from two-parent homes as come from one-parent homes, according to a study conducted by the national Association of Elementary School Principles."⁷

According to the National Center for Health Statistics, a study shows "Children from single-parent homes are more than twice as likely as children from two-parent families to suffer emotional and behavioral problems."⁸ When we look at the emotional affect absent fathers have on their children, this in many cases results in criminal actions and lashing out because of the lack of a positive male's emotional guidance. "Moreover, the most reliable predictor of juvenile crime is not income or race, but family structure. Seventy percent of imprisoned U.S. minors have spent at least part of their lives without fathers."⁹ The child's development is important from newborns to the age of adulthood. At this age the children have had much time with their father and their teachings are rooted enough within them to help them along life's journey. While a child is always in need of guidance it is these crucial self-identifying independent searching years that a father's guidance is greatly needed. Dealing with young men, without a positive father's training at this age, many are prone to not know fatherhood themselves and will feed from their absent teacher and act out of ignorance to proper fatherhood themselves.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

Charles Augustus Ballard – president of the National Institute for Responsible Fatherhood and Family Development, which is a group in Cleveland that works with teenage fathers, gives an amazing example of fatherless teenage men who become fathers at a young age. It shows the gaping hole of development that their absentee fathers left. Ballard states,

He once asked a group of 15 boys how many were fathers. Only two raised their hands. When he asked how many had babies, 14 hands went up. They just don't think like fathers, Ballard says, "They don't connect pregnancy with marriage or husbanding or fatherhood." At least 65 percent of his clients never had meaningful relationships with their fathers. Ballard is currently organizing similar programs in 17 U.S. cities.¹⁰

This comment by Ballard raises the concern that there are many men in our society impregnating women but not having a clue about how to father a child. Some obviously do not even think of themselves as such. With this epidemic on the rise in our culture, especially our black community, we must look at our past in order to see where this issue of fatherlessness derives from.

Like in all situations, it is the root that must be discovered in order to find out how to battle the causes of it. With this issue being passed down from generation to generation where did it come from? In our black communities there is a problem with absent fathers that do not tend to their growing sons and daughters. How can a young boy grow up knowing how to become a man if he has never witnessed one himself? Should we as a society even expect the young men in our culture to know better? Society often attacks our black men and treats them as if they are less than other cultures. It is impossible to expect something from someone who was never given another option. If an absentee

¹⁰ Ibid.

father was the only model for young boys, is it right as a society to expect them to be anything different?

Without a loving, cultivating, nurturing model, visual and experiential to make a choice from they will naturally default to the model they know. Even if they were never exposed to one, without a choice, their model becomes ignorance. We may never solve the problem in its entirety, but providing a positive model that young fatherless men can choose from will increase the chances of them being successful as fathers and men themselves. As this issue continues to spread in our black communities we must figure out where it came from and fight it at its root cause.

Our country has a dark past that in many ways affects our society today. It is common to see racism in our schools, communities, corporate America, our churches, and even families. In many families it is considered an unspoken rule not to be attracted to, or worst date someone outside of their race. This is sometimes because many believe their own race and ethnicity is more superior to others. In 2013, we are still arguing over hate crimes against race and ethnicity. There is in many cases an undertone of hate, anger, bitterness, and rage against other ethnicities. In many cases, this is because of what has been passed down from previous generations. Racism still runs rampant in our society. Many would argue that the recent George Zimmerman-Trayvon Martin trial was controversial because of this issue, racism. The non-guilty verdict of George Zimmerman is sure to be spoken about for years to come. In many ways the black community sees the non-guilty verdict as another stab in the back from a country that treated them with such injustice and discrimination for so long. Racism in our country, some may argue, was first witnessed in slavery when Europeans captured and enslaved Africans bringing them

to this country to work and labor for little to nothing. Europeans controlled the Africans with their updated weapons and fear.

Slavery continued for nearly 240 years from the 1619 to 1865, when the U.S. Constitution's Thirteenth Amendment was implemented and officially ended slavery. How has slavery affected our black community when it comes to the family unit? Heather Andrea Williams, an author and researcher states,

Slavery not only inhibited family formation but made stable, secure family life difficult if not impossible. Enslaved people could not legally marry in any American colony or state. Colonial and state laws considered them property and commodities, not legal persons who could enter into contracts, and marriage was, and is, very much a legal contract. This means that until 1865 when slavery ended in this country, the vast majority of African Americans could not legally marry.¹¹

How did slavery affect the men beyond the marriage unit? It is said that fathers often lived on different plantations than their wives and families and often made long trips to see their families. Fathers were often taken away from families and at times owned by separate slave owners than their wives and children. "Family separation through the sale was a constant threat. Enslaved people lived with the perpetual possibility of separation through the sale of one or more family members...a father might be sold away by his owner while the mother and children remained behind, or the mother and children might be sold."¹²

Historian Michael Tadman has estimated that approximately one third of enslaved children in the upper South states of Maryland and Virginia experienced family separation in one of three possible scenarios: sale away from parents; sale with mother

¹¹ "How Slavery Affected African American Families," Freedom's Story, accessed June, 26, 2013, <http://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/tserve/freedom/1609-1865/essays/aafamilies.htm>.

¹² Ibid.

away from father; or sale of mother or father away from child. The fear of separation haunted adults who knew how likely it was to happen. Young children, innocently unaware of the possibilities, learned quickly of the pain that such separations could inflict.¹³

Children were dealt a hand and had no clue it would affect generations to come long after them. The mental slavery that these events put into the minds of our black men is in many ways still seen today through our family formation. Heather Williams had an interesting take on the affects that this had on men, she states,

Frederick Douglass, who was enslaved in Maryland before he escaped to Massachusetts and became an abolitionist stridently working to end slavery, began the narrative of his life by examining the effect of slavery on his own family. He never knew his father, he said, although he heard it whispered that it was his owner.¹⁴

Douglass went ahead and stated his further feelings on the matter of family formation in slavery times. “In his narrative, aimed at an abolitionist audience, Douglass suggested that slave-owners purposefully separated children from their parents in order to blunt the development of affection between them.”¹⁵ To further back up Douglass’s comment Heather Andrea Williams states,

Similarly, white northern novelist and abolitionist, Harriet Beecher Stowe used the sale and separation of families as a sharp critique of slavery in her famous novel, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*. Abolitionists such as Douglass and Stowe argued that slavery was immoral on many grounds, and the destruction of families was one of them.¹⁶

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

This effect on the black family's structure and mentality during these times were strongly attributed to their slave owners. Often the children of the slaves saw two dominant figures in their lives, their fathers and their owners. This provided a sense of confusion, which to obey. Williams further touched on this and said,

A child's status was set at birth and followed that of its mother, not the father as might have been expected...what impact would this have had on black men who were being denied the right to determine the status of their children even though they lived in a patriarchal society in which men were generally dominant?¹⁷

Further evidence on the matter came out as others began to look at today's society. Today's African American family structure and slavery is connected in many ways. One connection is the lack of fatherhood in the family structure due to their slave owner's relinquishing their power and constant diminishment of authority that a father would normally have over his family. As authority and manhood was being stripped from the father's hands, it is not difficult to believe these acts have created a generational mental blockage for the black male. Consistently being tormented with acts and thoughts of separation from their families weighed heavy on the self-esteem, purpose, and gifting of the black male. Over nearly 240 years, it is not a surprise that generations of black men have lost their value and connection to their true purpose and gifting as men that are active, loving, nurturing, and present in the lives of their families.

In 1965, as an employee of the Office of Policy Planning in the Labor Department during the Johnson Administration, Moynihan released a report called, *The Negro Family: The Case for National Action*. Drawing on the work of sociologist E. Franklin Frazer, Moynihan traced problems he said African Americans encountered in 1965 back to slavery. Although he acknowledged a racist virus in the American bloodstream, and noted three centuries of unimaginable mistreatment, Moynihan blamed what he saw as the disintegration of poor, urban black families squarely on slavery. He said slavery had developed a "fatherless matrifocal (mother-centered) pattern" within black families. Men, he claimed, did

¹⁷ Ibid.

not learn roles of providing and protecting, and this shortcoming passed down through generations.¹⁸

The abuse and mistreatment of African Americans continued long after slavery was abolished. After physical slavery African American men dealt with a deeper sense of bondage, mental slavery. Slavery of the mind some might believe is worst because it is the mind that controls your feelings and it is your feelings that dictate your actions. While dealing with mental slavery and newfound physical slavery, there was a clash of what action to take. The dilemma for freed slaves is what do they do now that they are free? At this point black men had another battle to fight, which was no longer physical but emotional, mental, and spiritual. They had to deal with the constant scrutiny of European Americans targeting black masculinity, rights, and their public image, consistently flooding society with the thought that African Americans were not equal to them.

Degrading misrepresentations of Africans and African Americans have long and consistent history. According to Kenneth W. Goings, they were produced in the United States, Europe, and Asia from the 1880s to the late 1950s. They were almost universally derogatory, with exaggerated racial features that help to prove that, indeed, African Americans were not only different but inferior as well.¹⁹

In the late 19th century, black men were depicted as lazy and childlike, docile and happy, in the role of servant. These misrepresentations served to disseminate the view of black men as well suited to slavery. These images offered nostalgic revisions of slavery times, protecting the idea that slavery was not harmful.²⁰

These actions continued for decades serving only to reinforce the already uphill battle that the African American male was dealing with. African Americans at this point

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Morris, Susan Booker, 2011, "Targeting Black Masculinity: An Analysis Of The (mis)Representation Of Black Men In The History Of Early American Popular Culture," *Interdisciplinary Humanities* 28, no. 2: 77-87, Academic Search Premier, EBSCOhost (accessed June 21, 2013).

²⁰ Ibid.

had an uphill battle with fighting for equality according to European Americans standards.

Representations of black men as servants, butlers, porters, etc. Were ever present in American film, entertainment objects, and advertisement, but as the 20th century began, a different, and opposite, misrepresentation was created of the black man as brute and buck. Both these processes of symbolization utilized constructed ideas of masculinity and resulted in two dangerous misrepresentations that have functioned in the economy of images and ideas in U.S. popular culture and created unreal assumptions that negatively impact African American men to the present day.²¹

As European Americans consistently raised the bar in society for African Americans trying to reach equality, we saw physical harm, which evoked fear in the minds of the men. The men continued to try to reach for a status, which they viewed as equality. The question that arises is, were African Americans ever supposed to reach for the status of someone other than themselves? There was a consistent mental blockage that causes the African American male to continue to look for acceptance from the same ethnicity and race of people that enslaved them in the first place. The African American male must find himself and release himself from the generational bondage and mental slavery that was rooted in them so long ago. "For too many African Americans, especially young males, dealing in drugs offers instant material wealth and improved social standing among peers. Oftentimes, the dealer becomes a role model for others who are impressed by his/her carefree lifestyle, flashy material wealth, and large sums of pocket money."²² These young men are being mentored, but not by positive men. Young African American men are involved in crime at high rates.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Stanley F. Battle. "African American Males At A Crossroad," *Journal of Health & Social Policy*, 2002, 86.

Reasons offered for the explosion in youth violence include the continued breakdown of the American family, easy availability of guns, the eroding quality of public schools, and the glorification of violence in the media. According to a study by the National Crime Analysis Project at Northeastern University, there has been a 24% increase in homicides nationwide, and a 36% increase in overall violent crime, due largely to an unexpected surge of violence among young boys.²³

This bondage has controlled our black men for centuries and has deeply affected our family formation. There needs to be positive males in the lives of fatherless men to stop this generational curse and put a stop to the curse of ignorance, helping the young men to find themselves and their gifting, and giving them the choice as to which path they will take. It is ultimately up to the young men to choose which model they will accept, the absent fatherless model or the stand-in positive male model. Having a positive male mentor is important for these young men who are fatherless and in trouble. A positive male reinforcement is needed to help cultivate the male in the young man.

Many approaches have been tried, but this one requires personal sacrifice and a commitment of the most valuable commodity we have-time. Men from four major ethnic groups will be recruited to work together and mentor boys. There has probably never been as crucial a time for African Americans, Latino, Caribbean, and Native American people in the United States to begin to define the circumstances, needs, and imperatives of family life in our communities.²⁴

“Boys, with strong, warm, nurturing fathers are more socially competent, more persistent at solving problems, and more self-directed, according to Norma Radin, M.S.W., Ph.D., a social – worker professor at the University of Michigan, in Ann

²³ Ibid., 87.

²⁴ Ibid., 88.

Arbor.”²⁵ This will better the chances of future generations of black men. Implementing model stand in, helping the black male to forgive their past model and to move forward with a positive, bondage free mentality, energizing them to become men of vision, purpose, gifting, and love. Through mentoring this can be attained.

Willie Lynch in his letter written in the year 1712 taught American slave owners how to control their slaves. He spoke about how to inflict fear in the minds of the male and create a sense of independence in the minds of the females. Causing the women to be independent without the need of a male and the male being physically strong, but weak and fearful mentally, would allow for better control from the slave owners. Lynch spoke about keeping the male out of the home and separate from the family purposefully to dismantle the family unit. The way to control them was to physically beat them to the point of death so by the age of sixteen they were mentally paralyzed by fear and controlled. Breeding the men with women and selling them off caused for much mental damage and parental separation with the family. The males were there to watch their females being raped, beat, and abused. The males were so stricken with fear that they were unable to respond to their innate fatherly instinct of protection and defense.

The fathers were not the only ones affected. Imagine how the young sons viewed themselves as men because of what they saw from their fathers? Their only point of reference was fear, timidity, submission, and conquering this other male that did not look like them. Mentally they were trained not to be fathers and be fearful, not only through physical abuse and labor, but through example from their fathers. This is essential and still seen today in our society. The male is quick to reproduce but slow to father.

²⁵ “The Crisis of The Absent Father,” accessed January 10, 2014, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/222196378?accountid=1060>.

Responsibility and accountability is not of importance and causes for male absenteeism. Thomas Foster states, "Slavery violated the masculinity of black men who were denied the ability to protect vulnerable female dependents."²⁶ To further emasculate the male what is not often spoken of is the fact that males were on the other end of sexual abuse in being sexually abused themselves as punishment.

In the context of slavery, literary scholars have shown that sexual abuse of men was part of the Spanish slave system in Cuba. Robert Richmond Ellis argues that the account of former slave Juan Francisco Manzano has commonly been regarded as a searing indictment of a physical mistreatment of slaves but can also be read as silent testimony to a kind of abuse largely unacknowledged by historians of slavery and critics of slave narratives: the sexual violation of male slaves.²⁷

This only proves the emasculation the black male had to endure during these times. Mental, sexual, emotional, and physical abuse during the years of slavery, from 1620 to 1865, has had a major impact on the psych of the black male and the family as a whole. "Like heterosexual relations between white men and black women, sex between masters and male slaves undoubtedly occurred, sometimes in affectionate and close relationships, but also as a particular kind of punishment."²⁸ This was done to further emasculate the male and demonstrate who was the dominant person in the relationship.

The effect on black males historically easily shows the pathway to our current father absenteeism issue. Education and mentoring is needed to help the young black male forge a new path of responsibility, identity, and leadership.

²⁶ Thomas A. Foster. "The Sexual Abuse of Black Men Under American Slavery," *Journal Of The History Of Sexuality* 20, no. 3: (June 2011): 446.

²⁷ Ibid., 447.

²⁸ Ibid., 452.

CHAPTER FOUR

THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION

The study of God is one of the most controversial studies in human existence. Studying a Supreme Being or higher power causes many questions personally, religiously, and emotionally. Theology is one of the oldest forms of science and it is safe to assume everyone has some connection with its research. This paper will detail various opinions on the study of God. Researching various theologians, this paper will show various opinions on the subject. This paper will search for the one theologian that best relates to the topic of my document.

Detailing opinions, research, and arguments will help discover which theologian will best fit my representation of this document concerning mentorship of fatherless black men in a post-modern society. When speaking about theology, what is the truth? How can a finite human understand and comprehend such an infinite God? Is it possible to relate the bible and its messages to our current situations? This paper will highlight and underscore theological perspectives from various theologians and from looking at their opinions and related feelings on the topic will find the one theologian that best connects to my thesis topic. Growing up can be a trying, a challenging, and a tiring journey.

Finding yourself, discovering who and what you are, is a journey that most have a struggle in discovering. This journey can be even more challenging without positive guidance. For a young male's perspective, having a positive role model to help guide

through the bumps and hurdles that life presents is essential and makes for better decisions that create lifelong outcomes. Without this positive model to glean from, males grow up without a holistic perspective concerning life. They enter into a world that is harsh, cruel, the weak are devoured and the strong are greatly tested. It is common that males without a proper male role model will suffer from an excess need of affirmation, direction, and connection. These males often tend to gravitate towards gangs, unruly behavior, and excessive attention seeking by any means necessary. The desire to feel needed and affirmed in many homes comes from the need of a positive male within the house. Laying a proper foundation creates a more positive, responsible, and holistic view towards life and its challenges. These young black males in particular come from a suppressed mentality, fueled by a society that oppresses the idea of positive males, particularly black males.

The image of black males advertised are usually seen on music videos where the males seem to only have worth when a female, cars, and jewelry are attached to them. Rarely do these music video black males present an image that promotes education, love, and responsibility, but rather glorifies in the idea of materialism, placing more value on a dollar and what they have materially than what they have gained mentally. This sends messages to men across the globe that these behaviors are normal. The black culture has experienced much oppression in a white supremacy society. The difference is, they are no longer in physical slavery; many are enslaved in their minds and need liberation.

Luke 4: 18 states, "The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are oppressed." James H. Cone in his

book, *A Black Theology of Liberation* states, “Christian theology is a theology of liberation. It is a rational study of the being of God in the world in light of the existential situation of an oppressed community, relating the forces of liberation to the essence of the gospel, which is Jesus Christ.”¹

There is a need for liberation in the lives of people that lack. That lack can be social, economic, relational, financial, emotional, and even spiritual. Christ came to free us and provide liberation to those who are oppressed. The issue with fatherlessness in our culture is growing at a rapid rate. If we turn a blind eye to this obvious dyer need, we are gradually killing our conscious, because when humankind as a whole suffers we all suffer. Christ in his journey to free the oppressed is concerned about the holistic being of a person rather than just one part. This includes the part that goes lacking because of the absence of a proper role model in the household. Is it true that an individual lacking in a certain area or oppressed by a lack of, their situation, or mindset is in bondage and in need of liberation? It is true, anything that holds an individual back from being free is in a sense suppression and oppression which Christ came to heal and free. Howard Thurman and his Liberation theology views are similar in its approach. The oppressed must be free and Christ and his message are for those who are bound, oppressed and their backs are against the wall. “People who live with their backs against the wall are persons who live in situations where they are not, in his words self-actualized. Self-actualized people are socially and psychologically whole. They may have some problems but their lives are

¹ James H. Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation* (New York: Orbis Books, 1990), 1.

fundamentally whole. Persons who are not self-actualized lack this sense of wholeness and fulfillment.”²

Touching on the importance of the oppressed being free, Thurman points out certain views that oppression goes further than just social, racial, and economic. It deals with the root issue, which he feels is a spiritual/moral issue that Christ can heal. Young men need healing from absentee fathers and the fathers that are absent need healing that only Christ can provide. The fathers need spiritual direction and healing from the soul.

“Thurman’s view on human oppression goes beyond questions of racial and gender oppression, which would later become so central to black feminist theology. He wanted to deal with oppression’s core or its soul rather than merely its manifestations in issues such as gender and race. One example of this fact is the manner in which Thurman dealt with segregation, describing it as a spiritual/moral problem.”³ Thurman does a great job in pulling the weight of the problem away from the effects and focuses on the root issue, the lack within a person. Speaking that human liberation is also needed for someone oppressing others. Thurman referred to segregation as a sickness and points out that it takes away from the individual spiritually.

Can these fatherlessness issues be solved through spiritual healing? Men without a proper model lack stability and wholeness that Thurman refers to in his theology of human liberation. Men without a proper model in their lives are faced with inward fears that prevent them from facing life’s responsibilities. That fear encourages them to try to solve the issue in negative ways and attach themselves to negative people. Christ came to

² Alonzo Johnson, *Good News for the Disinherited: Howard Thurman On Jesus Of Nazareth And Human Liberation* (New York, NY: University Press Of America, 1997), 95.

³ Ibid., 96

heal us from fears and abandonment issues, bringing forth wholeness within our emotions and mentally. He covers our lack and solidifies who we are and brings forth self-realization. Thurman states, “Wherever Jesus spirit appears, the oppressed gather fresh courage; for the announced the good news that fear, hypocrisy, and hatred the three hounds of hell that tract the trail of the disinherited, need to have no dominion over them.”⁴ This provides hope for those who are broken by their lack of representation from fathers within their lives. While mentors can help, ultimately it is God who will provide direction.

While God will provide direction, it is still the father’s job to train and rear up their children. Without this rearing and teaching fatherless males are left to discover this world on their own without guidance. They lack wholeness and feel a need for affirmation. One must look at the bible and its ideals concerning fathering from a biblical perspective. “But above all, fathers in Israel became teachers of their children, not primarily in that more sophisticated mode exhibited in the book of Proverbs but through daily contact and informal conversations between themselves and their children (Dt. 11:19), prompted more often than not by questions posed by the children themselves.”⁵ Without teaching the children are left to teach themselves and go through life missing foundational truths that were never instilled by their father, causing lack within their lives. This oppression can be healed and liberated by Christ, which Thurman speaks about.

⁴ Ibid., 93

⁵ John W. Miller, *Calling God Father: Essays On The Bible, Fatherhood & Culture* (New York, NY: Paulist Press, 1999), 93.

James H. Cone stands on his beliefs that blacks in particular have suffered greatly from the oppression of whites in our society. Cone believes Christ relates to blacks in the sense that he too was oppressed by the powers of his time, thus relating on a more common level with blacks. Cone refers to his theology as black theology or black liberation theology, in an effort to bring attention to the need of black liberation in a white supremacy society. Cone is a strong advocate for black rights and believes that blacks in particular have been held back economically, racially, academically, and socially to name a few. Cone grew up in a time of Jim Crow laws where segregation was the norm, and had a hard time relating a 'white' Christ to 'black' issues. Cone believes Christ was in fact more related to black people than what was taught by white Christians.

Standing on his beliefs that blacks are great and have been oppressed and suppressed from slavery to the current, Cone fights for the rights of black Americans. Cone stands on the fact that Christ came to free those who are oppressed by liberation including blacks. While it may seem that Cone's theology tends to point the finger at white America rather than taking a more introspective look, he does discuss other forms of oppression that may exist.

Therefore, being reconciled to God does not mean that one's skin is physically black. It essentially depends on the color of your heart, soul, and mind. Some may want to argue that persons with skins physically black will have a running start on others; but there seems to be enough evidence that though one's skin is black, the heart may be lily white. The real questions are: Where is your identity? Where is your being? Does it lie with the oppressed blacks or with the white's oppressors? Let us hope there are enough to answer this question correctly so that America will not be compelled to acknowledge a common humanity only by seeing that blood is always one color.⁶

⁶ Dwight N. Hopkins, *Black Faith And Public Talk: Critical Essays On James H. Cone's Black Theology & Black Power* (New York, NY: Orbis Books, 1999), 17.

Cone points out the issue runs deeper and can be relatable to a wide perspective of oppressed individuals who are affected by the views and oppressions of a white supremacist society. From this perspective one can relate on a greater, more broader scale. One must challenge the fact that the issues of today are solely because of oppression from white America. Not to discredit the harsh and tumultuous effects that slavery has inflicted on blacks in America, but one must wonder if the issue can be solely blamed on oppression. As I stated earlier, slavery has had a great and lasting effect on the father image in the black society. Spiritually, emotionally, and psychologically, black males were emasculated over the course of 245 years and were further oppressed post-slavery and in many cases still are.

Cone's black theology is in many cases correct and agreeable. I find myself torn because of the harsh aggression towards another race. It is commonly known that Cone's point of view concerning black theology is very similar to Malcom X and his black power movement. His theology can leave room for blacks to take less responsibility for their own actions concerning their lack. While blacks have been dealt a bad hand in American society, it is the black's fault if they choose to walk in ignorance concerning their own freedom and responsibilities, especially concerning their children. I am in no way diminishing the effects of history on black culture however, I am stating that blacks cannot continue to hold whites responsible for their lack of responsibility concerning their families, education, and spirituality.

While oppression has taken place, we choose to remain in that state, and teach each generation to repeat the cycle. Blacks must make a choice to no longer walk in ignorance to the fact that many of them are walking around in mental slavery. Many are

need of liberation, but liberation in their minds. This can only be done by example, educating, and through the guidance of Christ. Cone states,

We Black theologians contended that if God sided with the poor and the weak in biblical times, then why not today? If salvation is a historical event of rescue, a deliverance of Blacks from white American racial oppression? When we pressed these questions on white theologians and preachers, they always turned to the white, meek, pale-faced, blue eyed Jesus as if we Blacks were expected to embrace him as our Savior. But we vehemently rejected that Jesus.⁷

While completely understanding Cone's stance on the fact that blacks in no way were able, or still to this day, able to relate to a Christ that in no way resembles them but rather resembles the one that oppresses them. The message that white churches sent to the black community seems to be completely contrary to the message Jesus taught.

This in many ways played against the idea that Christ was a God that could love blacks. Mark Chapman states,

No issue placed a greater strain on the faith of African-American Christians than the problem of racial segregation and the support it received from white churches. How could white Christians bar black people from their churches and yet claim to read the same Bible and worship the same Jesus as African-American Christians?⁸

With this in mind, it is completely understandable that someone like Cone or Thurman would take a stand against people who claim their faith was only for themselves and non-relatable to other ethnicities and their struggles.

A Theology of liberation can be used on a universal level; it is applicable to Latin America, European American, African American, Asian American and all nationalities universally. The gospel is not limited to one sect of people, but rather is relatable to all issues. All ethnicities suffer from the need of some form of liberation. Males that grow up

⁷ Larry G. Murphy, *Down By The Riverside: Readings In African American Religion* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2000), 397.

⁸ Lawrence Edward Carter Sr., *Walking Integrity: Benjamin Elijah Mays, Mentor To Martin Luther King Jr.*, (Atlanta, GA: Mercer University Press, 1998), 233.

without a proper male role model in their lives are faced with adversity inwardly, lack within themselves, a need for affirmation, and a lack of wholeness. Christ came to liberate those who are broken and lack completeness; this is applicable to this sect of individuals. It is only through Christ, as Thurman states, that man can realize self-actualization. It is impossible to know who you are until you know where you have come from.

Christ used a mentoring model on his disciples, as did Paul with Timothy and Titus, Moses with Joshua, and countless others. It was through successors that the mentor themselves were able to live on. It was through visually seeing the mentor that provided life and a choice for them to be different. Where would they have been without their mentors? John, and Peter along with his brother Andrew, could have been fishermen in their native town Capernaum without the mentorship of Christ. Matthew could have continued with his tax business and never wrote the Gospel of Matthew. It was through Christ and his mentoring his disciples found their purpose and left their jobs. Each disciple suffered with issues, but Christ still chose them and worked with them. Christ was the perfect mentor, consistently teaching, sowing seeds of encouragement and cultivating the men. It was because of Christ's mentorship that when he left the church grew, expanded, and humanity is still reaping the benefits of his mentorship today.

Men are in need of mentoring and wholeness that comes ultimately only from Christ but can be shown through well-suited mentors as well. Examples are needed in the world to give those who are poor emotionally and mentally a chance. Other people have benefited from the theology of liberation in relation to mentoring. Mentoring is a strong way to draw strength from others and grow at an exceptional rate because our growth is

limited to our environment. Augustine in his various teachings was a big advocate for teaching and believed in surrounding himself with people he could glean from and draw strength from.

The most instructive primary sources on Augustine's mentoring are his Confessions, sermons, letters, and the Rule, as well as Possidius's Life of Augustine... Since his youth Augustine has demonstrated a strong need for others. As a professor of rhetoric in Milan, he formed community of philosophically minded friends in pursuit of the happy life.⁹

Christ came to give his people a choice. Through liberation from their oppression and suppression of life's twist and turns they are able to experience the joy of self-actualization.

From the outset, liberation theology has been conscious of its regional or particular character in terms of the sociocultural context in which it has sprung to life; but at no moment has it ever renounced its will to universality. Contextually and universality are two of the identifying notes of liberation theology.¹⁰

⁹ Edward L. Smither, *Augustine As Mentor: A Model For Preparing Spiritual Leaders* (Nashville, Tennessee: B&H Academic, 2008), 134.

¹⁰ Ignacio Ellacuria and Jon Sobrino, eds., *Mysterium Liberationis: Fundamental Concepts Of Liberation Theology* (New York, NY: Orbis Books, 1993), 34.

CHAPTER FIVE

THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

One of the biggest issues our society faces today is not domestic arguing, or the lack of a love relationship between a man and woman, or teen pregnancy. It is not the constant decline in educational attainment with our youth in our school system. It is not the lack of emotional care that many women feel they receive from their spouses. It is not the gangs that plague our inner cities, or the overcrowding in our prisons. No, it is not any of these things; these are merely the results of something much bigger, the root cause. The lack of fatherhood in the lives of children preferably boys are at an all-time high and have spread to uncontained proportions in our communities. The lack of fathers has caused or aided many, if not all of the issues stated earlier. Discovering a solid focused question was in many cases difficult because of the broad issue that absentee fathers or father figures have caused in our society. Why do fatherless males tend to live life with a sense of emptiness and need for affirmation, which results in destructive and unruly behavior including gang violence, anger, high dropout rates or poor grades, early sexual engagement, and little sense of discipline or vision in their lives?

I believe an answer to this problem that is plaguing our society is mentoring. These young men are in need of an example of qualified males who are strong leaders in their households, communities, and churches. Fatherless boys will become what they see. If they are exposed to positive male role models this will give them a chance to make

good choices as to how they will walk out their lives. Through this mentoring program the hope is to give these young men a sense of hope that they can in fact be better than their fathers were. By experiencing positivity exhibited through teachings and relational experience these young men will become inspired and have a greater sense of who and what they are.

While this will not change everyone, it will at least equip participants with resources and the chance to make more holistic choices for their lives. These young men need mentors to look to for life's guidance their fathers were unable to provide. We have plenty of surrogate mothers but few surrogate fathers, men that will father the fatherless and are a shoulder to lean on during tough times that life presents.

Donald Miller starts off his book, *Father Fiction: Chapters For A Fatherless Generation*," explaining his life's story and how not having a father in his life affected him as a man. He speaks about the consequences of how not having that role model in his life has caused him pain and insecurities in growing up and how it still affects him till this day. He becomes very vulnerable in his approach to the reader, showing his weaknesses and pain, allowing the reader to truly understand the unmasked effect of not having a father played in his life.

Miller being transparent allows for the reader to let down their guard as well, which allows the words that Miller speaks penetrate their hearts:

I'm thirty-eight years old, and I still need a father...But in so many ways I'm still that kid, not sure exactly how to be emotionally intimate with a girl without feeling weak, not sure my work is good enough, not sure if the people who are clapping would really like me if they got to know me. I attribute a lot of those insecurities to father issues. And any confidence I have I attribute to having worked through father issues. Everyone is insecure, and not everybody without a

father lacks confidence an emotional health, but the connection between the two is undeniable.¹

Men growing up without fathers has a tremendous effect on their ability to make right decisions. We often see more fatherless men end up in trouble with the law because of the lack of discipline and vision that fathers help provide for their sons. I heard recently that ninety-four percent of people in prison are men. Eighty-five percent of those men grew up in fatherless homes.”² A father is there to help rear a child in helping them discover their proper gifting, helping their son to become a man of character, integrity and honor. This comes often from those tough talks, chores, instructions and discipline that fathers often provide their sons. Miller believes mentoring fatherless, young males, is an answer to this wide spread epidemic of absentee fathers in our society. Miller believes mentoring young fatherless males can put a stop to the majority of our problems with males in prison.

If we have a crisis in this country, it’s more than a fatherless crisis, though. It’s a crisis of manhood, or masculinity. T’s affecting our families, our schools, it’s filling our prisons, and it’s killing the hearts of our women. I’ve started a mentoring program that offers resources to the 360,000 churches in America, to provide mentors for the 27 million kids growing up without fathers. I am convinced that within twenty years we can shut down prisons because we have provided positive male role models for kids who would otherwise be headed for trouble. I am convinced we can curb teen suicide, unwanted pregnancy and abortion, and turn back the tidal divorce rate if we step in and provide mentors for kids without dads.”³

Spending time with these young men and creating relationships will have a great impact on their lives in the long run, providing a sense of hope to voided hearts. Humans are only able to give what they possess; no one should expect anything from anyone that

¹ Donald Miller, *Father Fiction: Chapters For A Fatherless Generation* (New York, NY: Howard Books, 2010), 2.

² Ibid., 3.

³ Ibid., 4.

does not possess what they are asking for. The same goes for fatherless men; no one should ask fatherless men to be great men and fathers because they never had a personal point of reference. We must provide that point of reference if we want them to become men of valor and integrity. Men that have strong foundations produce men that have strong foundations; the latter must be disciplined or mentored by men who have a solid hold on life. Few of these types of programs exist in the church today, which is part of the reason the church grows but only with less men in attendance every Sunday. Dr. Larry L. Macon describes in his book, *Discipling The African American Male: How To Get Black Men Into Church And Keep Them There*, the issues that many African American men are faced with and how to disciple them.

From the very beginning of black slavery, African Americans were cut off from their historical roots and culture. White men separated black men from their families as a means of subjugating them. In the interest of security, every effort was made to separate slaves from a common tribal group or with a common language or religion.⁴

Black male's suffering continued after slavery with much discrimination and with White men and society not referring to them as men but rather referring to them as "boy."

These acts just further emasculated black males; the effects mentally still in many cases have not been dealt with in society. Macon touches on this as he states, "Even during the post-slavery period, blacks felt the consequences of oppression and injustice in the political, social, and economic realms of everyday existence. Yet black man's religion gave him hope and a sense of being somebody."⁵ While black males experienced hope

⁴ Larry L. Macon, *Discipling The African American Male: How To Get Black Men Into Church And Keep Them There* (Jonesboro, AR: Four-G Publishers, Inc., 2003), 16.

⁵ Ibid.

through their religion, fathers were pulled out of the home on purpose. Over the course of the 246 years that slavery in the U.S. lasted black men, were emasculated, segregated, abused, misused, and downplayed by slave owners. That paired with post slavery trauma and abuse from lynching, segregation, and discrimination that we still see to this day, the mental and emotional prison effect this has had on our black males has been enormous. How do you become a father when for 246 years fathers were not allowed to be fathers? How do you become a strong independent male when the males around you are oppressed and controlled by other men that do not even resemble you, and all you've known is oppression? What this generation of fatherless men need are *MEN*tors. Mentors that know how to help guide these young men that are headed down wrong paths to having positive options and choices. "Our ancestors struggled in the dungeon, slave ships and plantations. They endured the worst holocaust ever experienced, but remained confident they would live to see their twenty-first birthday."⁶

There is a rumor that by the year 2050, there will be no African American fathers living with their children. In 1920, 90 percent of our children had their fathers at home. In 1960, 80 percent of our children had their fathers at home. In 2002, only 32 percent of our children had their fathers at home. With this current trend, by the year 2000 there will be less than 30 percent and by the year 2050 there may not be one African American family that has its father present.⁷

With information like this, something must be done to help these young men that hold the key to our future and passing on power for the next generations of males. Jawanza Kunjufu further touches on this by stating, "Unfortunately, if there's an absence of fathers, crime increases. We have too many boys with guns, primarily because we have too few fathers in the home. Crime increases in neighborhoods without fathers,

⁶ Jawanza Kunjufu, *Restoring The Village: Solutions For The Black Family* (Chicago, IL: African American Images, 2003), 31.

⁷ Ibid., 32.

because neighborhoods without men able and willing to confront youth, chase threatening gangs and reproach delinquent fathers are at risk.”⁸ Kunjufu points out the problem that absentee fathers present to not only the home, but society as a whole. Our society is made up of homes. In order to change our society we must first start within the homes and spread abroad. Many of society’s issues are just the products of home’s root issues. Not having a father in the home not only affects the men, but also the females on a great scale. A man’s love that a female should first experience should be her father’s. If that is not the case, she will experiment and substitute it through negative vices.

“The consequences of boys growing up without fathers are they will turn to guns while girls without fathers will turn to having babies.”⁹ Who better to teach a boy to be a man than a man himself? While appreciation for my mother and her aid towards my development is great, it is impossible for a woman to teach a man to be a man; all she can be is the best woman she can be. How can a woman teach a man to be something that she has never been nor taken part of the struggle? While a mother is a great vice and aid, she is not built to teach a male everything he needs to be a man. If this was the case, a man would not be needed in society; only a mother would be needed. A father and mother are to work together and make up a complete guide; without one it leaves a hole in the heart of the child. With this being said, the only way to assist these young men that grew up without their fathers is to take action, time, and give them a proper guide.

It is horrible to sit around and complain about a problem when we can do something and provide a solution. This mentoring program will assist with that solution. During this mentoring program, six sessions filled with interactive teachings that covered

⁸ Ibid., 67.

⁹ Ibid., 68.

topics that are important to educating young men were held. We dealt with young men from ages twelve to eighteen, all without a father or permanent father figure in their lives. The topics consisted of subjects such as purpose and identity, area of gifting, forgiving how not to become like your father, African American history, women, and God's relationship with man.

These topics were covered in a related format with their current issues; it was interactive to get their expressive views on the topics. Spending time with these young men was key to building something that is rare with them—trust. While building trust will take some time, over the course of the six weeks, these men began to show progress in their ways of thinking. Each session was held at six different locations. These young men are and have become products of their environments. The goal was to take them out of their environments and place them in the environments of positive black males who themselves have suffered from the same disease—fatherlessness. The only difference is these men have made a choice to be different and grabbed hold of positive male models that assisted them with their progression in life. All these men are clergy. All of them are happily married. All graduated from high school. All are successful in their secular careers, and positive men within their communities. Each of these men shared their stories, testimonies, and participated in the interactive sessions.

These young men are not looking for authority, but relationship. A group was created on Facebook where the men were able to join. Positive words or encouragement was posted that only the group was able to see and respond to. We reached out to the young men in the program, inquiring about their studies, extracurricular activities, and home life. These young men came from people that are apart of or connected to my

context. This program was conducted with young men that are associated with men in my context. All these young men have experienced lives without a father or proper father figure; each living with their single-mothers, single-grandmothers, or single-foster mothers.

Mentoring programs have proven to be successful. One program was conducted by Jeremiah Wright in his bid to reach out to African American men and educate them on their gifting, purpose, and responsibilities as men. The meetings were held at his church, Trinity United Church of Christ in Chicago, Illinois.

Jeremiah Wright became interested in the plight of African American men when he was challenged to deal with inner-city black males...He began by announcing from the pulpit his burden and concern for the African American male. After he had shared his concern, he announced several Sundays in advance that he would meet with all men.¹⁰

Wright made sure he taught on topics that were relatable to black men and the current issues they were facing:

He met with them for an hour each Saturday afternoon, lecturing on the writings of black authors like Jawanza Kunjufu and Naim Akbar and conducting Bible studies. The men responded immediately to Wright's Afrocentric perspective. He discovered that they were most interested in learning about their historical roots and about the issues facing today's black man.¹¹

Wright took it a little further by describing why he feels his male mentoring program has been so successful. "Wright thinks that men are attached to his church because he presents a positive role model for them and offers a unique presentation that makes the Bible come alive through their experiences. He noted that his lecture series on

¹⁰ Larry L. Macon, *Discipling*, 35.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 35.

male-female relationships was probably the most appreciated.”¹² Like Wright, Anthony Evans conducts a mentoring program and has been successful in his endeavors concerning it.

Evan’s approach is a bit different but still seems to be effective.

The adult male membership and Sunday attendance is about forty percent. One does not merely join this church by stepping forward on a Sunday morning. One must enter an exhaustive new membership class, sign a covenantal agreement that includes one’s concurrence not to legally sue the church, be active in at least one ministry, and give financially to the church, along with other agreed upon stipulations.¹³

While these programs are generally for discipline of African American men, the principles are the same and can be applied to younger men that suffer from the lack of fathers in their lives. These young men suffer from the same issues as the older men that lack drive, inspiration, motivation and purpose. These men utilized their gifts for teaching and incorporated sessions geared towards the men’s current issues, relationally, socially, economically, and racially.

These younger men suffer from the same things without a father figure to guide them through it. They are looking not for an authority figure, but a relational figure. They are looking for someone who is concerned about their wellbeing; someone willing to listen and inspire them to be better; someone willing to believe in them no matter how horrible their story is. That is what these young fatherless men need. They have received this encouragement from women all their lives, but they never received it from someone who can identify with them like only he can, a man.

¹² Ibid., 36.

¹³ Ibid., 37.

Jawanza Kunjufu speaks about the importance a father is to the lives of his sons.

“You are the greatest influence on your son’s life. I cannot stress enough that your son is watching you 24/7. Sometimes African Americans believe the greatest problem affecting them is racism and economics. I believe that fatherlessness is the second greatest problem facing us today.”¹⁴ Kunjufu also gives current statistics concerning this issue:

- Sixty-three percent of youth that commit suicide are from fatherless homes.
- Ninety percent of all homeless and runaway children are from fatherless homes.
- Eighty-five percent of all children that exhibit behavioral disorders come from fatherless homes.
- Eighty percent of rapists motivated by displaced anger come from fatherless homes.
- Seventy-five percent of all adolescent patients in chemical abuse centers come from fatherless homes.
- Seventy percent of juveniles in state-operated institutions come from fatherless homes.
- Eighty-five percent of all youths sitting in prisons grew up in fatherless homes.
- Eighty-two percent of teenage girls who get pregnant come from fatherless homes.¹⁵

The best example of mentoring to prove my stance on the reason why these young men need to be mentored is Jesus himself. He stated in scripture, "Follow me and I will make you fishers of men." (Matt. 4:19) Jesus made it evident that these men (his disciples) needed to be mentored. He spent years with them, training them in his ways, not only through words, through actions. Jesus knew in order to replicate himself, he needed to spend time and mentor these men from all walks of life. If they were to become powerful men, he could not leave them the way they were and expect them to carry the mantle he offered. Taking them under his wing through spending time, eating together, learning from one another; through Christ’s action-filled teachings the disciples became

¹⁴ Jawanza Kunjufu, *Raising Black Boys* (Chicago, IL: African American Images, 2007), 48.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 49.

powerful men of faith and changed the face of the church. Christ became their father figure and as a result we still follow their teachings today because they were mentored.

"Go into all the world and make disciples of every nation." Matt. 28:19, 20 (ISV)

Jesus commanded his disciples to teach, empower, commission, encourage, and mentor others just as he did with them. Jesus understood people needed to see something different in order to believe they themselves can become something different. Where would the disciples be if they never witnessed Jesus?

Another note to take a look at is that scripture does not mention anything about the disciple's fathers. While they were all mostly adult men, one may wonder where their fatherly presence was. It would be interesting to know if the disciples struggle with what most black males struggle with today, absentee fathers.

Another example of mentoring in the bible was with Paul and Timothy. Paul understood the need to have a successor. He knew he needed to pass on what he knew or it would pass with him. Paul was older, while Timothy was younger and often struggled with his youth and the challenges it presented. Paul was there to encourage and mentor Timothy in his time of need. Timothy's sense of youthful struggle proved to be a note that needed to be dealt with. His challenges showed some sense of insecurity in dealing with others that may have challenged his ability to lead because of it. Paul states in one of his letters to Timothy, "Let no one look down on your youthfulness, but rather in speech, conduct, love, faith and purity, show yourself an example of those who believe. (1 Tim. 4:12) This is Paul instructing Timothy to not be downcast because of other's opinions on his youth, but to continue to look forward and be an example of who you believe in.

With this type of guidance, Timothy had strong mentorship through Paul. Again scripture never speaks about Timothy's father. How ironic would it be if in fact his father was never present and the spirit lead Paul to help train and mentor Timothy into the man he was ordained to become. Maybe this is the reason Timothy suffered from timidity and fear.

There are cases of mentorship throughout the scriptures that paint a picture that is undeniable. Mentorship is needed on all levels and some of our greatest spiritual leaders were birthed through mentorship. Mentorship is discussed throughout scripture and the results of it have proven successful at all times. When dealing with fatherless black boys who are on the verge of becoming men, mentorship is needed, if anything for a point of reference of how a man should be.

In a time when young men are laying foundational truth they will live by for the rest of their lives, it is important that we catch them between fourteen and twenty and impart into them. Many do not finish high school and experience a major fall in their academic lives. In a society that thrives on education it is important to encourage men of the importance of education and setting up their futures. "Studies of school achievement often report that children from fatherless homes do less well in school than children in homes with father present."¹⁶ This goes to show the importance of having a father around in a boy's life. Being a male is innate; becoming a man is taught and learned.

The word "mentor" comes from the ancient Greek epic poem, *The Odyssey*. When the King of Ithaca, Odysseus, was away at war for a long time, his friend, Mentor, became a tutor to Odysseus's son, sort of a "fill-in" father. Webster defines mentor as "a trusted counselor, a guide; a mentor; someone he can look up to, someone who can teach him how to be a man, someone he can follow, and someone he can trust. My definition of a mentor is a man willing to serve; to

¹⁶ Elizabeth Herzog & Cecelia E. Sudia, *Boys In Fatherless Families* (Honolulu, HI: University Press Of The Pacific, 1971), 20.

share his life with a boy; to be a role model, an encourager, a listener. Mentoring helps to develop good character traits in a boy: fairness, decency, self-sacrifice, respect, loyalty, service, responsibility, integrity, unselfishness, honor, and self-esteem. And when a godly man mentors a boy, he is helping build Christian character into that boy and hopefully, will introduce him to Christ.¹⁷

Men that are Christian-based are the best mentors because not only do they provide guidance on a secular, they have a strong biblical foundational truth that is unwavering and rooted in something that will never fail, Christ. While men fail daily, the young men will not solely put their trust in the men that mentor, but rather in the God of the mentors. In this case if the men ever fail, the young men will have a solid foundation in someone who will not ever fail them, Christ Jesus.

Statistics have shown that one-on-one mentoring is the most effective way to reach a fatherless child. Children with mentors are 46 percent less likely to do drugs, 33 percent less likely to resort to violence, 53 percent less likely to drop out of school, and 59 percent more likely to improve their grades. One-on-one mentoring has also been shown to lower the rates of teen pregnancy, suicide, and gang involvement in communities. Mentoring tells a child that he is cared for, that he matters, and that he is not alone. Mentoring shows a child how to be respectful and how to interact with peers and elders. Mentoring gives a child confidence in his talents, gifts, and natural abilities, which helps shape his pursuits, education, and eventual occupation.¹⁸

How do we as people aid other people in helping them change their behavior? The guidance of a Christian mentor that listens, teaches, and creates relationship is key to this being possible. “Many counselors agree that healthy and loving human relationships are the most powerful behavior modifier in the world. Fatherless children lack these loving relationships and often feel lonely, flawed, and incomplete.”¹⁹ Regardless of what we

¹⁷ Sam Mehaffie, *Every Man's A Mentor* (Nashville, TN: Xulon Press, 2005), 25-26.

¹⁸ John Sowers, *Fatherless Generation: Redeeming The Story* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 113-114.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 114.

might say, a child will remember more of what we do. Our legacy as mentors will be measured by what we did or did not do. The apostle Paul famously said,

Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ. (1 Corinthians 11:1 NASB). This verse gets at one of the key ideas behind mentoring. A godly mentor needs to have a vertical relationship with God. A mentor doesn't need to have it all together, but he should be growing in his faith as he follows the one both he and the mentee are trying to emulate.²⁰

We must rear up our young men in the way they should go and that is according to what God requires of them. "Train up a child in the way he should go, even when he is old he will not depart from it." Prov. 22:6 (ASV) Many fathers are not training their children properly so when they become adults their paths of choice often result in criminal activity, low educational attainment, anger, and a need for affirmation that results in crying out for attention through negative outlets. In order to train a child in the way they should go a father must be connected to the child's maker, which is God.

Without God's guidance fathers will raise their children according to their own morals, precepts, and laws, which will vary with each person. There must be a barometer fathers must hold too, and that must be the word of God. If not, training will be subject to opinion. This clearly says mentors must also hold up their mentees in prayer, asking for God's guidance on how to interact and help guide each individual, because each individual is unique and different. The mentors must have a biblical foundation in order to help rear the mentee in the way of the Lord. "Many fatherless children may not know the difference between an inside voice and an outside voice. They may not understand

²⁰ Ibid., 127-128.

they cannot act the same way in a restaurant as they do on the playground. A coach gently firmly shows them appropriate behavior for each setting.”²¹

Being patient with these young men is key to their development. Mentors must also display patience with them as they develop into who they are. Just as Christ is patient with his people, the mentors must display this same type of patience with fatherless young men.

Interacting with the young men’s mothers was also part of the program. Learning inside information concerning the young men and their issues is a good way to determine how the men are responding to the program. Once you get the mothers on your side, this is another voice that supports the findings of the program.

What the young men are looking for is not another authoritative figure, but rather a relational figure, someone they can relate to and express to without judgment.

A good coach will also build an appropriate relationship with the child’s mother, respecting the role that she plays in his life. Ask her to fill in the details you may not be aware of – the areas in which a child is excelling, the activities he is involved in, and the kinds of things he talks about at home. Mentors should make sure that their input does not undermine the role of the mother; as much as possible, try to make sure your involvement complements the positive efforts she may be making in raising her child.²²

It is not only men who are willing to listen to Gods heart on behalf of the fatherless young men but to also listen to the children’s heart and find a place where they can connect. Patience is a key factor in this program being successful. Teaching, interacting, and being involved in their lives will take patience. “Fathers, do not irritate and provoke your children to anger [do not exasperate them to resentment], but rear them [tenderly] in the training and discipline and the counsel and admonition of the Lord.”

²¹ Ibid., 132.

²² Ibid., 133.

Eph. 6:4, (Amp) This teaches us that trainers must keep themselves under control. In times of irrationality the mentors must keep composure and dignity. Often times, if the mentor is not solid in their beliefs, they can act irrationally if the child challenges them. Provoking them to anger is never a solution, but patience and love is the only pathway that must be taken in dealing with fatherless young men.

In conclusion, we must agree that research shows boys without fathers suffer from a wide array of issues such as criminal behavior, lack of responsibility, anger, lack of education, and a lack belonging, which makes them lash out in various ways. “A Fatherless child often rebels against authority, for it represents the sacred position his father once held. Authority is something to be avoided, mocked, or scorned.”²³

Through this an option for these young men are mentors, which will consist of men that are biblically based, who can provide wise counsel and lend an ear to their hearts. This program consisted of six sessions of interactive teaching on various topics, geared towards men and their need to understand where they come from, where they are, and where they are going. Meeting one-on-one with them, conducting interviews and case studies, will aid the mentees in trusting the mentors. Providing calls and involvement in their lives will only help the fatherless young men understand they have someone on their side rooting for them to succeed in life. Engaging through social networks such as Facebook will keep it relative to their post-modern way of communicating as well. Lives will be changed through this program.

²³ Ibid., 45.

CHAPTER SIX

PROJECT ANALYSIS

The hypothesis of this project suggests that when young men that have grown up without a father figure in their lives but are mentored through simple life principles there is a change in their attitudes, communication with their mothers, and they experience more self-awareness concerning fatherhood/men with a better chance of connecting to God. This chapter will discuss the objectives of the project, the data collected, the data analysis, and the outcomes. In addition this chapter will discuss the details of the mentoring sessions, including the details of the information discussed, and the noticed results of sessions. The information within this chapter will provide ample understanding of the process of the program, including workshop activities, which helped provide relative topics and points of discussion positively affecting their relationship with God and their mothers.

These sessions also helped the young men deal with their pain and discover a form of healing through expression. This was helpful to them as young men, and positively affected their families, communities, and lives. While immediate change in many ways may not be seen, it is a seed planted in the lives of these young men and its effects will continue sprout over time.

The mentoring fatherless black men research project began on Saturday, March 8, 2014 and met on the following Saturday mornings through May 3, 2014. Interviews and

greetings with the parents were done a week prior to the initial start of the sessions on March 1, 2014. Parents were greeted and asked to take a seat for a one on one interview concerning their sons and grandsons. The parents each gave wonderful insight concerning their sons and grandsons, describing their trials and challenges in raising young men without the help of a proper father figure in the young men's lives. Each described fathers who were not present and how they were consumed with their own lives or passed away because of horrible street activity. The parents all agreed their children were overall good children but lacked certain key things like direction, and mentorship. At times these young men were disrespectful, had anger issues, suffered from a false sense of confidence, or did not communicate as much as the parents wanted.

One of the guardians who, was the grandmother, said her grandson was a very deep thinker but suffered from anger issues. She said he had deep rooted anger against his mother because of her choice in men and because she engaged in narcotics abuse. The grandmother stated that anytime he would see a man beating on a woman he instantly became enraged and felt the need to defend whoever the woman was. The young man also shows aggression towards his grandmother and more compassion towards his grandfather. The grandmother believes he has anger issues with women that stem from his relationship with his mother and the lack of a father. Other mothers said their son's attitudes ranged from angry, to reclusive, to loving.

At the first session of the program all participants were greeted and welcomed upon entering the workshop area. Being that each session was early in the morning, breakfast was provided and fellowship was encouraged at the start of each session, beginning at 9:00 A.M. The session teachings began at 9:15 A.M. All sessions were

facilitated or co facilitated by myself. The interesting addition to the program was that each session was held at a different location each week with the exception of the first and last session being held at Beechcroft High School, 6100 Beechcroft Rd., Columbus, OH. The data collected is a direct result of the focus group, which included some members of the congregation, and some of Beechcroft's High School basketball team. There was a total of seven participants.

Focus Group Sessions

Session 1-Orientation/Introduction

After the participants were given a time of fellowship and breakfast, the orientation session began with an introduction and prayer, followed by participant introductions. The group was given a pre-survey consisting of twenty-one questions that dealt with fatherhood, identity, manhood, forgiveness, and also consisted of questions that inquired about their personal lives. Questions were asked such as "Do you understand the importance of having a positive male in your life?" and "Do you feel you will make a positive impact on this generation?" which would later be used for evaluating and determining the results of the sessions.

The surveys, interviews with the parents and interviewees gathered, were used to document findings on the mentees. The participants were given an overview of what to expect in the coming six weeks for the duration of the program. They were encouraged to attend all sessions because each session would cover a different topic that was important. During this time standards and expectations were set. Each expression and opinion must

be respected during the program. We would respect each member's feelings on various topics whether or not we agreed. The students were also required to fill out a consent form in addition to their pre-surveys. Copies of all forms can be found in Appendix A. All individuals in the mentoring program confirmed their willingness to participate by signing the consent forms. Participants were given the opportunity to ask questions throughout this orientation process. The group was encouraged to add the Facebook page for further interaction. We touched base with the mentees each week on Wednesday. During this time, we also prayed and discussed their day. The session ended in prayer and concluded with each individual one on one interview with the mentee. Questions were posed and the interview itself was focused and geared towards transparency and honesty, thus, beginning to create the relationship of mentor to mentee.

Demographical Findings

The pre-assessment collected the ideas of what the young men felt about themselves, their personal issues, male figures, and their feelings on their fathers.

The information was collected from the seven young male participants. Ages are reflected in the chart below:

Gender %	Age %
Male = 100%	12 = 12%
	14 = 25%
	15 = 12%
	16 = 25%
	17 = 25%

Pre-Assessment Findings

Each individual was given a pre-assessment survey that asked questions with the purpose of discovering their feelings concerning themselves, their mothers, fathers, male leadership, their engagement with drugs, sex, alcohol consumption, and goals. Below are a few questions that were asked and their responses to them:

	YES	NA	NO
Do you believe you have enough knowledge to teach others how to be positive successful black men?	57%	0%	43%
Has not having your father around negatively affected you?	29%	14%	57%
Do you have your 5-year goals/plans written down?	29%	0%	71%
Do you miss your father?	50%	0%	50%
Do you forgive your father for not being in your life?	29%	14%	57%

Session 2—HIStory

The parents dropped their children off at Beechcroft High School. From there we traveled to our next location which was St. James Christian Center at 2713 Northland

Plaza Dr., Columbus, OH, 43231 with Pastor James Delaney as co-facilitator. Following refreshments, the session began with prayer, a brief introduction, and a discussion of the agenda for the day. The goals of this particular session were to help participants understand the importance of exposure and talking about their past, opening the door for communication and expressing their pain. Each young man was asked to express one of the most hurtful experiences in their lives and how that affected them.

The theme of HIStory is expressed in a literal sense. The mentees expressed the depths of their hearts. As each person expressed, it encouraged the next person to follow suit. Secrets of pain, emotional abuse, and sexual abuse surfaced which resulted in many men expressing themselves about their fathers not being present. As each man expressed their past, tears began to flow from their eyes. God's healing power was expressed during this session, and how honesty does not equate to weakness. Each participant spoke about the lack of a positive father in their lives, and discussion on forgiveness was implemented into the session. The participants made the following conclusions:

- a. Acknowledging your pain and hurt is the beginning of healing.
- b. The only way to forgive and move forward is to face your pain head on.
- c. Prayer provides further healing; allowing God to mend hearts is the only way to recovery.
- d. Scripture soothes the soul and allows release.
- e. Forgiveness is an act of faith, and is giving something in advance, forward-giving.
- f. Forgiveness is a journey.
- g. Communication with others about the pain is necessary for healing.

- h. Hurt people often hurt other people; most of our fathers were hurt themselves as children.

In addition to the above comments the young men's mothers commented that this was one of the most powerful sessions. Many of the young men went home talking about how much more free they felt after this session. The class concluded with closing prayer. At the conclusion of the workshop, the mentees and participants were taken on a tour of the facility and further encouraged to depend on God no matter the situation, the past, or the pain.

Session 3—Vision/Brotherhood

This session was a bit of a break in the flow of things. The workshop session began with prayer led by the facilitator. The session goals were to help participants understand vision and the importance of surrounding yourself with the proper environment. In this session, the participants were given an opportunity to visit a black-owned barbershop Ohhs & Ahhs Hair Designs, which is a staple on the east side of Columbus, OH. This session was co-facilitated by Byron Woods who is the founder and owner of the business. At this session the young men were given free haircuts and got a chance to mingle and play pool with each other. During this time, each young man was spending time with each other, creating bonding memories.

Once all the heads were cut, the young men met in the back room for a session dealing with vision for their lives. Each young man spoke about their goals in life and what they planned for their career goals. In this session we exchanged ideas on how to attain their dreams. We touched on the importance of keeping God first as your guide and

how nothing is impossible with help. We stressed the fact that young men must have a guide during their lives that is greater than self. All agreed God was that guide. Educating yourself on your dreams and goals was also discussed.

Byron Woods shared his testimony of being shot several times and having to rely on God as his guide. He touched on how importance it was as men to have vision for their lives. He shared his process of creating his shop and how they all have the opportunity to be something great. It was determined from the workshop and dialogues that vision and a focused mind of Christ provided a sense of direction for their lives and future. Many participants spoke about wanting to become professional athletes. Though, none of them considered the business side of the sports world. Their reaction to the possibility to owning or managing areas in the sport sparked their interest and curiosity to look beyond the surface. Challenging them to dig deeper within themselves and consider that they were more than great athletes, but could become educators, business owners, or a scholar expanded their thinking. Many commented that they did not know those career options were possible to obtain, thus giving them hope and awareness. Many of the participants said this session was the most fun to them. They loved the atmosphere and it caused them to want to strive for more.

Session 4—Fatherhood/Family

After meeting at Beechcroft High School, which is the drop-off and pick-up point for the parents, we headed to Greater Works Church of God where the meeting was held. During this session a few of the young men, who were siblings, were unable to come because they were out of town. In this session fatherhood, manhood, and family

were the main points of discussion. This was co-facilitated by another positive male, Pastor Mark Hampton. Pastor Hampton gave his testimony of living fatherless and how his father was an alcoholic. Growing up fatherless meant he suffered with the need to fill the void in some manner, resulting in a life of street activity. The goal of the session was to help participants understand fatherhood and the father's role in the family structure. In this session the participants were given an opportunity to reflect on their own personal childhoods and how not having a father impacted their lives.

They were taught the importance of a father who is present in the lives of his children and why it is so crucial to have a male present in the household. We discussed the qualities and characteristics of man and his relation to God. Discussions of what a man is, was deeply discussed. The characteristics of a man, was dissected for further understanding for young men. The young men were in a room with other men that joined the session from Pastor Mark Hampton's ministry. This gave the young men a chance to glean from the minds of men who were involved in the lives of their own families.

Prov. 22:6 was discussed in this session. The participants made the following comments:

- a. The real quality of a man is seen in how he takes care of his responsibilities.
- b. It is the man's job to cultivate, protect, teach, love, and provide for his family.
- c. The order of leadership is God first then the man, his wife, and children.
- d. The vision of any man should be the rearing up of his family and children.
- e. When no one is there the man is supposed to be there.
- f. The man should not only be the leader of the house but also the foundation holding it up.

- g. Having a relationship with God is one of the keys to a successful relationship with your family.
- h. The power of choices, the choices you make today will show where you will be in years to come, and how you will bring up your family.

The session concluded with the advice of the other men in the building towards the young men and a closing prayer. The group was reminded to engage on Facebook and look at the updates on the page of this week's lesson. After the session ended the young men remained in the church area and fellowshiped with others. Some of them played basketball in the courtyard. The participants were picked up later by their mothers.

Session 5—Respecting Women/Yourself

This session was held at the church of Pastor Eric Miles. The session goals were to help participants gain knowledge concerning their sexuality. God's given method of conducting yourself sexually and with the opposite sex was discussed. This session began with prayer and introductions of each participant. The session was simply entitled "*Respecting Women/Yourself*." During this session the mentees were given an opportunity to reflect on their sexual feelings, desires, past pain, and curiosity. The forum was open and without judgment.

Pastor Miles opened up concerning his past pain and how it can lead to a life of promiscuity. Detailing his past offered the young men a chance to connect on a subject that is often left out of sermons and biblical teachings. Questions were asked and answers were given. Topics such as, girlfriends verses education, were presented as well as pre-marital sex. This session allowed the young men to express their feelings on a topic that

is often at the center of their thoughts. These thoughts are also thoughts they are not often educated on and the way to express and deal with them properly.

The group discussed and heard several testimonies on promiscuity, the mind of a man, how women operate, and how not to get caught up in relationships that are unfruitful according to God's words. The group came to an understanding that there is an importance placed on saving yourself until marriage, walking in integrity concerning your sexual desires, supporting and respecting yourself and the opposite sex. When platforms such as these are presented it leaves little room for ignorance to be a reason for failure. It causes a new level of accountability. Exposure produces healing, releases condemnation, and liberates the person from bondage. Many of the men understood and felt this session was important because they knew truth, but needed to hear it from a male.

Women are a huge topic among teenage males, but they must feel free enough to discuss their feelings openly without condemnation. The mentees found a point of connection with the facilitator once they figured out that others went through the same thing and were distracted by the same temptation. It offered hope in knowing they could be different and had a choice with their actions. It was also determined that without God it is near impossible to overcome these human temptations. Having friends that are trying themselves to deal properly with the opposite sex provides accountability and encouragement. A participant revealed a need to know how to deal with multiple women he had interest in. After extended discussion and review of the scripture and testimonies, some of the teens provided feedback and made the following statements.

It is important as men to carry ourselves respectfully towards women because:

- a. It is not right to mistreat or disrespect women.
- b. Relationships will be there, it is important to focus on building myself, and my relationship with God.
- c. It is important for us to do unto others, as we want to be done to ourselves.
- d. It is important for us to not follow the crowd but create the crowd and be different.
- e. Having multiple women at one time does not make me a man.
- f. God called us to be men of integrity.
- g. Sexual activity before marriage is a distraction and often results in emotional rants, disrespectful acts, and further fornication.
- h. We should look at the women we date as our sisters in Christ first, friends second, best friends third, and engagement/marriage fourth.
- i. Promiscuous men hurt women, and we do not want to continue the trend of men that sleep with women and leave them.
- j. Having sexual desires are normal and God given, but we must learn to not allow them to rule our actions and lives.

The session concluded with closing prayer and last minute discussions.

Session 6—Wrap Up/Overview/Exit Interviews

This final session was held at Beechcroft High School, where the first session took place, as a symbol for coming full circle. After fellowship and greeting one another, the session began with opening prayer. The session goals were to further expound on what

they learned over the past six weeks. During this session, positive historical figures were discussed such as Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcom X. Certain theologians were also discussed such as Howard Thurman and his views on liberation theology, including his views on holistic healing.

In this session the mentees were given an opportunity to reflect on Prov. 22:6 and Eph. 6:4, manhood and man's connection with God. Several discussions concerning what a man is caused the young mentees to pull back from previous sessions and show engagement and comprehension during the sessions. The group identified what being a man consisted of. It was concluded that men are not just a gender that is strong physically; his strength includes mental, spiritual, and emotional strength, someone with vision for their lives and their families. A man is not judged by how many women he can sleep with, but rather by his character and how he helps others.

A man is someone who submits to God and follows God's instructions rather than his own. It was also discovered that real men pray, which was a part of each session and weekly call. Calling them and praying with them instills men must look to God in all they do. After further discussion and review of the scriptures and content, some mentees provided the statements below concerning fathers, manhood, and Christ:

- a. "Coming together in a group environment along with other young men helps with the healing process, knowing I am not alone."
- b. "We are given an opportunity to reflect on our pain one to another."
- c. "Having someone there as a mentor creates a bond and helps that void that not having a father has created."

- d. "I realized just how important a father is to the lives of young men. I will make sure I am present in my children's lives."
- e. "Prayer helps me focus on God more and helps put my focus on him rather than my issues."
- f. "A man is someone that not only leads their family, but is an example to their families."
- g. "Mentoring provides a sense of community and belonging."
- h. "I've never known how important a father is until this program. I was angry but this has started my healing process."
- i. "It provides a sense of belonging where people can come together, discuss pain and goals, with the guidance of people who have experienced and achieved those things."
- j. "Feels like I have a better sense of direction for my life."
- k. "Feel like I learned more about myself. Hearing other people's stories helped me tell my own. I've never opened up like that before."
- l. "Now I know how important a father is to the lives of his children."
- m. "These sessions made me feel like I was important, like someone actually cared."
- n. "I wish this program would continue and wasn't over."
- o. "I know now that mentors are important. Having someone there is very important."

The session concluded with the completion of assessment forms, post-interviews with parents and mentees, and closing prayer. The mentees were encouraged to pray, read their word, get active in church, and continue to respond to their facilitator/mentor. This

session was ended with group prayer, each young man holding hands within the circle, showing unity and agreement among one another. After the session concluded, the participants remained in the meeting area for their one on one interviews and parents interviews.

Post-Interviews

Each participant was asked to not only complete a pre-interview, but also a post-interview detailing their experiences with the program and changes that may have occurred in the process. The following statements were direct comments made by the mentees through their post interviews. Positive comments were much higher than any negative comments concerning the program and their feeling towards the positive impact it has had on their lives. The following statements are the responses to the post-interview questions:

(All interviews were confidential; the names of the persons being interviewed were withheld for privacy reasons).

1. How have your actions/attitude changed since the program?
 - a. Interviewee #1: “Before I was hanging out with the wrong type of people. I was being pulled over by the cops. They always would let us off with a warning though. I don’t think that stuff is cool anymore and I want to make a positive change in my life. The program helped me through being able to talk my pain out. This program has started the healing process from the lack of having my father. I’m not totally healed, but it has started the process. It takes time, but it is definitely helping”

- b. Interviewee #2: "One of the things that changed for me was my desire to have a closer walk with God. It was because during each week I was called and we always ended with prayer. I learned real men pray."
 - c. Interviewee #3: "I learned about my purpose in life. Now I feel like I have some sense of direction. I've always been big on finding myself and this program helps with that."
 - d. Interviewee #4: "I've learned about the importance of prayer, and I feel closer to God now through this program. This program made me want to be a better man and be there for my children, when I have them. I also want to grow in my relationship with Christ."
 - e. Interviewee #5: "Honestly, the program was good but it didn't change me much. I believe it was more for the others than for me. I did understand that fathers are important; I didn't know how important they actually were before this program. When I have children, I believe this helped me be more aware of my actions around them. Spiritually, it did make me want to get closer to God."
2. How has your relationship with your mother changed?
- a. Interviewee #1: "It changed my relationship with my mom. We talk about my business more about girls and stuff. She wasn't too happy with the things I told her, but it's going good."
 - b. Interviewee #2: "My mom and I have always had a good relationship, but I feel this just made it better."
 - c. Interviewee #3: "I'm definitely more open to my mother. I talk to her about my pain and my dad more. I recently went home and cleaned up the

- d. Interviewee #4: “Yes. I know I need to be a positive man. I know now that I need to be better and want to do something positive with my life. I want to be a Godly man that takes care of his family.”
 - e. Interviewee #5: “I already knew what I wanted to do with my life. So I really don’t feel that my direction has improved. The program was good though.”
5. Do you feel you know what a real man is now after the program?
- a. Interviewee #1: “I learned that a man is someone that takes care of his family. A man is also someone who has a relationship with God and does the right thing at all times.”
 - b. Interviewee #2: “Someone who is there for his family. Someone who has vision for his life. A man is a leader that God created in his image.”
 - c. Interviewee #3: “A man is someone who knows who they are and is not fazed by what others believe or say. Someone who has purpose and identity.”
 - d. Interviewee #4: “A man is someone who is there for their family. I also learned a man respects others, which starts with himself. A man gives back to others.”
 - e. Interviewee #5: “Yes, I learned about how important a man is to his family.”

The Pre & Post-Survey Results

The pre and post-survey was used by the facilitator of the mentoring program as a method for measuring project results. The mentees of the focus group were required to circle the appropriate answer that best identified their feelings at that moment to the best of their understanding. For the purpose of documentation, the findings “yes” and “no” were used as their choices. N/A was for those that did not answer either way.

	YES		NO		NA	
	PRE	POST	PRE	POST	PRE	POST
Do you know what a TRUE man is?	62%	100%	37%	0%	0%	0%

Analysis of Data

Prior to the workshop sessions of this project, 62% of the focus group claimed to have known what true man qualities are. After completing the sessions 100% of the group agreed to have known what real qualities of a man were. The pre and post-survey indicate a thirty-eight percentile point increase in awareness of what real qualities of a man are. This could be a result of the young men attending and understanding sessions that expressed what men were biblically, socially, academically, and mentally.

	YES		NO		NA	
	PRE	POST	PRE	POST	PRE	POST
Do you know what your purpose in life is?	71%	42%	29%	29%	14%	29%

Prior to the sessions of this project, 71% of the participants agreed to have known what their purpose in life was. After completing the workshop, 42% of the group agreed to have known what their purpose was. The pre and post-surveys indicate a twenty-nine percent decrease in the participants understanding their purpose in life. Several of the young men also left that answer blank or put “maybe” in the place of the other answers. The young men who did not have an answer saw a fifteen percent increase. This is interesting in the fact that with all the teachings on the purpose of men, their answers saw a decrease in knowing what their own purpose was. This could be due to the fact that the young men before the program felt that they knew and understood what their purpose was in life. After the program the information they learned challenged their belief and feeling in that area.

After asking the men in their personal interviews, some of the young men stated they thought they knew what their purpose was. The session challenged their way of thinking, causing them to second guess their original thought. Some even stated, after the session, they felt they did not know what their purpose in life was and felt the desire to discover it. Many also felt that a life of crime, which was all that they had seen in life, was a certainty to their personal purpose. They later discovered after the sessions that they in fact could be so much more and that lifestyle was not their true purpose.

Understanding these sessions are seeds that are planted, growth and change are expected to materialize over time.

	YES		NO		NA	
	PRE	POST	PRE	POST	PRE	POST
Do you believe you have enough knowledge to teach others to be positive successful black men?	57%	71%	42%	14%	0%	14%

Prior to the sessions of the project, 57% of the participants agreed they believed they had enough knowledge to inform and teach others to be successful black men. After completing the workshop, 71% of the group agreed they have enough information and knowledge to inform others on how to become successful black men. The pre and post-surveys indicate a fourteen percent increase in the focus group participants who now believe their knowledge had increased enough to inform and teach others to be successful black men in society.

This could be a direct result of the teachings that dealt with the purpose of men, and how a man should handle himself in dealing with others. All these sessions would have a strong impact on the mental change on this topic. After speaking with some of the men, some of them agreed if they had the chance they would go back and change their original responses from “yes” to “no” in the pre-survey. They felt after being informed about what a male is in each session, they actually did not know what they thought they

did. In order to keep the testing as authentic as possible, the original answers were maintained.

	YES		NO		NA	
	PRE	POST	PRE	POST	PRE	POST
Do you forgive your father for not being around?	14%	57%	57%	29%	28%	14%

Prior to the sessions of this project, 14% of the participants agreed they had forgiven their father for not being in their lives. After completing the workshop, 57% agreed to have gone through a process of forgiving their fathers for not being present in their lives. The pre and post-surveys indicate a forty-three percent increase of focus group participants who agree that they went through some form of transformative thinking in the area of forgiveness when it came to their absentee fathers. This could be a direct result of participants engaging in a few of the sessions that dealt with past pain. In many sessions the young men expressed the issues and root pain in their lives. This brought forth a form of healing through exposure in the environment of others with similar issues. Some young men began to see a difference in the image of their father, realizing that the majority of their fathers did not have fathers themselves. The young men learned the principle that one cannot give what they themselves do not have or have not experienced. This produced compassion in their hearts for the ones who left them. They realized the absentee fathers were also hurt and alone. The fathers felt the same

feeling of neglect that they were feeling at that very moment. While this was no excuse, this was a reason for their actions.

	YES		NO		NA	
	PRE	POST	PRE	POST	PRE	POST
Do you understand the importance of having a positive male in your life?	57%	71%	43%	14%	0%	14%

Prior to the workshop sessions of this project, 57% percent of the participants agreed that they understood the importance of having positive males in their lives. After completing the workshop 71% percent agreed that they understood the importance of having men in their lives that were positive. The pre and post-surveys indicate a 14% increase of focus group participants that males that are positive are important to their personal lives. This not only indicates an increase in understanding that they need positive males around but also that they desire it as well. This could be a direct result of participants being able to see specific examples of positive men that were involved in the program.

	YES		NO		NA	
	PRE	POST	PRE	POST	PRE	POST
Have you written down your 5-year goal plans for your life?	14%	100%	86%	0%	0%	0%

Prior to the workshop sessions of this project, 14% of the participants agreed to have written down their five-year goal plans. After completing the workshop, 100% of the participants agreed to having written down their five-year goal plans. The pre and post-surveys indicate an 86% increase of focus group participants who now have affected attitudes and behavior in their future, seen through their five-year goal plans. This could be the direct result of the young men engaging with business leaders in their communities, and the sessions on having a vision for your life. Each man walked out of the program with a five-year plan of their dreams and set goals to attain them. This shows a change in attitude for preparation and vision setting. Each man described wanting to be better and a positive influence on their community as some areas they wanted to improve on.

	YES		NO		NA	
	PRE	POST	PRE	POST	PRE	POST
Do you have men you can look up too?	71%	86%	29%	0%	0%	14%

Prior to the workshop sessions of this project, 71% of the participants agreed that they had men in their lives they could look up too. After completing the workshop 86% agreed that they had men they could look up too. The pre and post-surveys indicate a 15% increase of focus group participants agreed they had men they could look up too. Many of the young men agreed that now knowing what a positive male is they would go back and change their original answer in the pre-survey from “yes” to “no.” This indicates that showing men something different is essential to having them change their lives. These men originally thought bad was good; it was only until they experience something different that their minds changed. This could be due to the many sessions on manhood.

	YES		NO		NA	
	PRE	POST	PRE	POST	PRE	POST
Have you smoked weed or drank alcohol in the last 4 weeks?	14%	0%	71%	100%	14%	14%

Prior to the workshop sessions of this project, 14% of the participants stated that they had smoked marijuana or drank alcohol within the last four weeks. After completing the workshop, 100% of the participants stated that they had not engaged in any of that activity since the program started. The pre and post-surveys indicate a 29% point increase of the focus group stated they had not engaged in that activity within the last four weeks. This could be a direct result of the young men engaging with positive Godly men and the teachings on responsibility to do right at all times, because that is the responsibility of

men. Teaching and training the young men to be men of character may have been a factor that aided in this mindset change.

	YES		NO		NA	
	PRE	POST	PRE	POST	PRE	POST
Do you think/feel positive about yourself?	100%	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%

Prior to the workshop sessions of this project, 100% of the participants agreed that they thought positive about themselves. After completing the workshop, 100% still agreed they thought positive about themselves. The pre and post-surveys indicate a 0% increase of focus group participants. This shows the young men's original thoughts about themselves were positive and continued to be positive. After interviewing several of the young men, they spoke about how much more positive they felt about themselves concluding the sessions. They stated they had more awareness about what they are and who they were as men in today's society. They felt that through attending the sessions they were doing things that were positive and strengthened them. Many of the young men stated the program challenged their thinking and made them want to become better. This could be a direct result of the teaching, training, educating, bible reading, praying, testimonies, and open dialogue that transformed their way of thinking.

	YES		NO		NA	
	PRE	POST	PRE	POST	PRE	POST
Do you get along with your mother?	100%	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%

Prior to the workshop sessions of this project, 100% of the participants agreed that they got along with their mothers. After completing the workshop, 100% still agreed that they got along with their mothers. The pre and post-surveys indicate a 0% increase of focus group participants. This shows that the young men involved in the sessions originally believed that they had good relationships with their mothers. After interviewing several of the young men, they each spoke about how their communication level with their mothers improved.

After conducting the post interview with the mothers, they all agreed their sons showed higher signs of communication and openness about their lives. They stated that they spoke about their issues from their past and how much the program was aiding them in their healing process. The mothers felt closer to the sons through the exposure of their feelings and stated that because of their openness it has caused a deeper bond between the two. Since the conclusion of the program the mothers have consistently spoke about how the program has changed the lives of their sons and how much more focused, open, respectful, and happy they are since the program's conclusion. This could be a direct result of the teaching, training, educating, bible reading, praying, testimonies, and open dialogue that transformed their way of thinking and engagement with their mothers.

	YES		NO		NA	
	PRE	POST	PRE	POST	PRE	POST
Has not having a father affected you?	29%	57%	57%	43%	14%	0%

Prior to the workshop sessions of this project, 29% of the participants stated that they believed not having a father in their lives affected them. After completing the workshop 57% of the participants stated they believed not having a father in their lives affected them. The pre and post-surveys indicate a 23% increase of the focus group that believed not having a father in their lives affected them. This shows that the young men came to some awareness of their pain, hurt, and the necessity of a father. They began to understand that what they originally thought about themselves changed and that, in fact, they were affected by an absent father. This could be a direct result of the young men engaging with various positive godly men, teachings on fatherhood and what they mean to the family. Teaching the young men to look at their past pain and realize their void was essential to their healing. It was important they face what hurt them head on. Exposing their pain was crucial in the healing process. As a result, the young men, their attitudes and minds began a transformative process.

Conclusion

At the conclusion of the focus group sessions, the participants indicated a need to get closer to God. They expressed their pain and concerns more openly with their mothers. There was also a desire to strive for more and be a positive male in today's

society. Several of the young men now attend church services every week, and each are engaged in ministry programs that aid young male development. Some of the young men have gone as far as calling the facilitator “their father,” showing signs of change, inspiration and transformative thinking. Some of the young men have given their lives to Christ.

Parents have agreed that the program was successful and needed. They said the program has made their lives easier in their dealings with their sons. This project has proven to be successful and can be included as a ministry offering on a consistent basis for fatherless young black males. This focus group was introduced as a requirement for the Doctor of Ministry project and has proven to be healing, transformative, and inspirational for fatherless black males in our communities and churches.

The focus group, *Designing A Mentoring Program For Fatherless Black Males In A Post-Modern Generation*, had positive results and was proven to be successful. The foundational purpose of the program was to build self-awareness and create stronger communication between mothers and sons, grandmothers and grandsons, through practical lessons concerning manhood, vision, purpose, biblical teaching, and testimonies.

Through this program young men who have suffered from the disease of fatherly absenteeism were also given the chance to witness positive black males that provided real life testimonies on how to overcome the results of a lack of having a father. Since participating in the program the mentees have shown positive signs in their attitudes for improving their lives through education, goals, communication with mothers, and awareness for the need of being a positive male in our society.

The program originally started off with three students and grew to ten. Seven showed on the first day. Some of this was due to scheduling conflicts and lack of commitment from parents. Out of seven students, six students completed the six-week program. Each student reported a gain in knowledge and understanding concerning manhood, which included learning about what it means to be a man, how men have vision for their lives, how to forgive your father for not being present, dealing with your past pain and hurt, and respecting women to name a few.

At the end of the program the students and parents most dissatisfied answer was that the program was too short and needed to be extended for further sessions. Many parents commented that the program increased their relationship and communication with their sons and they began to speak about their visions and goals in life. This was something they never spoke about. Many expressed that the program was an encouragement to them and their sons.

Areas that needed improvement were expansion and reach. The program would be more effective if it was able to reach more young men and gather more community leaders to pour into the lives of these young men. Each young man having their own mentor for the duration of the program would make the program more effective as well.

My goal is to continue adding to the curriculum body of the program, developing it into a nonprofit organization that reaches underprivileged communities of young men who suffer from the lack of a father. Further development for the curriculum will include career development, anger management, resume' building and job search strategies to aid them in professional development. Aiding with their character, personal, mental, emotional, and spiritual development will cause for a more holistic male.

In light of the recent verdict of Michael Brown's killer not going to trial, it is essential that development take place in the black male, especially the fatherless black male. The program name will change to The I.D. Movement, which stands for Inspiring and Developing Fatherless Black Males to move forward with their lives.

One of the most transformative moments in the project was during a post-interview with one of the mothers of the young men. She began to open up her heart to me and told me that before this program her son had no one to look up to. He was lost and filled with anger. Since his engagement with the program, his actions, attitude, and mindset began to change. Before the program, her son was constantly in fights with others and getting into trouble with the law, but the program has changed him forever. This in effect will change others. Because his direction is being changed, his sphere of influence will be positively changed. Another transformative moment was when this young man referred to me as his father after giving his life to Christ. This is the reason this program is needed. While it will not change everyone, it will change someone, and that someone will change another.

There were numerous transformative moments in this program. One of the young men admitted to being sexually abused as a child. He had never shared that piece of his past before. The environment created felt safe enough for him to express such an emasculating event that took place in his childhood. He later spoke about how the program helped him further understand his purpose.

Transformation began to take place in the community and myself. This was apparent to me when it was communicated to me there was an overwhelming need for this program in the community. Our Mayor, clergymen, community activist, and radio

show host in the city have pushed, supported, and put their names behind this effort to help develop our fatherless black men. This is needed in my context.

One of the young men spoke to me during his post-interview and said the calls he received weekly really made him feel special because someone really believed in who he was. He stated he was never into prayer, but praying with them weekly really instilled a sense to find his purpose in Christ and grow as a man in church.

This further indicated that mentors are needed in the lives of young men who do not have positive male figures in their lives. This proved that young men must see something different in order for them to know that different is reachable for them. This is attained through constant mentorship and support from other males that can sow positive seeds into the lives of these fatherless young men. Their environment is crucial to their development; they must be placed in the face of other males who can help guide them down a positive path. The goal was to raise awareness for the need of fathers and men in the lives of children and improve communication with mothers; the project was successful and that goal was reached.

APPENDIX A

PRE & POST-ASSESSMENTS & INTERVIEWS

**Project Title: Designing A Mentoring Program For Fatherless
Black Males In A Post-Modern Generation
Facilitator: John C. Tyus**

Pre & Post-Assessment

Instructions: Please circle the answer that best fits.

Question	Answer	
Do you plan on attending college after High School?	Yes	No
Do you feel you are a positive male to your generation?	Yes	No
Do you feel you will make a positive impact on this generation?	Yes	No
Do you know what a TRUE Man is or his purpose?	Yes	No
Do you know what your purpose is in life?	Yes	No
Do you get along with your mother?	Yes	No
Do you think education is important to your future?	Yes	No
Have you smoked weed or drank alcohol in the last 4 weeks?	Yes	No
Do you have sex?	Yes	No
Is your father around?	Yes	No
Do you forgive your father for not being around?	Yes	No
Do you understand the importance of having a positive male in your life?	Yes	No
Do you believe that God has designed you for a specific purpose?	Yes	No

Do you believe you have enough knowledge to teach others to be positive successful Black Men?	Yes	No
Do you know what being a leader is?	Yes	No
I think positive about myself?	Yes	No
I have men that believe in me?	Yes	No
Has not having a father affected you?	Yes	No
Are your going to have children and do you believe you can give them what you father did not give you?	Yes	No
Do you have goals written down for the next 5 years of your life?	Yes	No
Do you have men you can look up too?	Yes	No

**Project Title: Designing A Mentoring Program For Fatherless
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Facilitator: John C. Tyus**

Pre & Post-Interview

1. Explain your definition of what it means to be a Man?
2. Explain what are good qualities of a Man?
3. How can someone get healing from a fatherless childhood?
4. What are some of your experiences as a child?
5. Do you miss your Father?
6. What is your relationship with your mother like?
7. Do you forgive your father for not being in your life?
8. Name some ways a Man should take care/love of his son?
9. What does it mean to be a leader?
10. Are you a Leader?

**Project Title: Designing A Mentoring Program For Fatherless
Black Males In A Post-Modern Generation
Facilitator: John C. Tyus**

Parent Pre-Assessment

1. How is the attitude of your son at home?
2. How can your son improve his way of thinking?
3. Does your son show signs of Anger, if so why?
4. Do you and your son get along/how is your relationship?
5. What are some of the root-issues your son deals with/where did it come from?
6. Does he ever mention his father?

**Project Title: Designing A Mentoring Program For Fatherless
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Facilitator: John C. Tyus**

Parent Post-Assessment

1. How is the attitude of your son at home?
2. How has your son improved his way of thinking?
3. Does your son show signs of Anger?
4. Has you and your son's relationship improved?
5. Does your son seem to be more open concerning his life?
6. Has he mentioned his father/if so what does he say?

APPENDIX B

PARENT/CHILD WRITTEN AGREEMENT

John C. Tyus, M.A., B.S., ®

Doctoral Program Written Agreement

Designing A Mentoring Program For Fatherless
Black Males In A Post-Modern Generation

Guardian: I _____ (*your name*) hereby am allowing John C. Tyus to include _____ (*student name*) in his mentorship program for his doctoral program at *United Theological Seminary*. As guardian, I am allowing Mr. Tyus to utilize all information he finds from his interviews, mentoring sessions, and all other discovered research with the young males to be included in any written, audio, visual, and social material for his dissertation/thesis project and to be used completely at his discretion. I wave any rights to any information found. I am allowing Mr. Tyus to spend time with the student during the testing of his program, and allowing the student to be in the presence of other successful positive males. I agree that Mr. Tyus has explained the purpose of his research and I (*the guardian*) am in agreement with him.

Student: I hereby consent to the use of my likeness through photography, drawing, video recording or other media, *comments (through audio recording, print, or other media)* and my “story” (*including personal information concerning my background, my circumstances, my career and personal goals and accomplishments, my education pursuits and attainments*) by John C. Tyus, his successors, agents.

(Guardian Signature)

(Date)

(Student Signature)

(Date)

(John C. Tyus, Signature)

(Date)

-Thank you for your cooperation in helping cultivate the next generation of leaders-

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